POLYHEDRON

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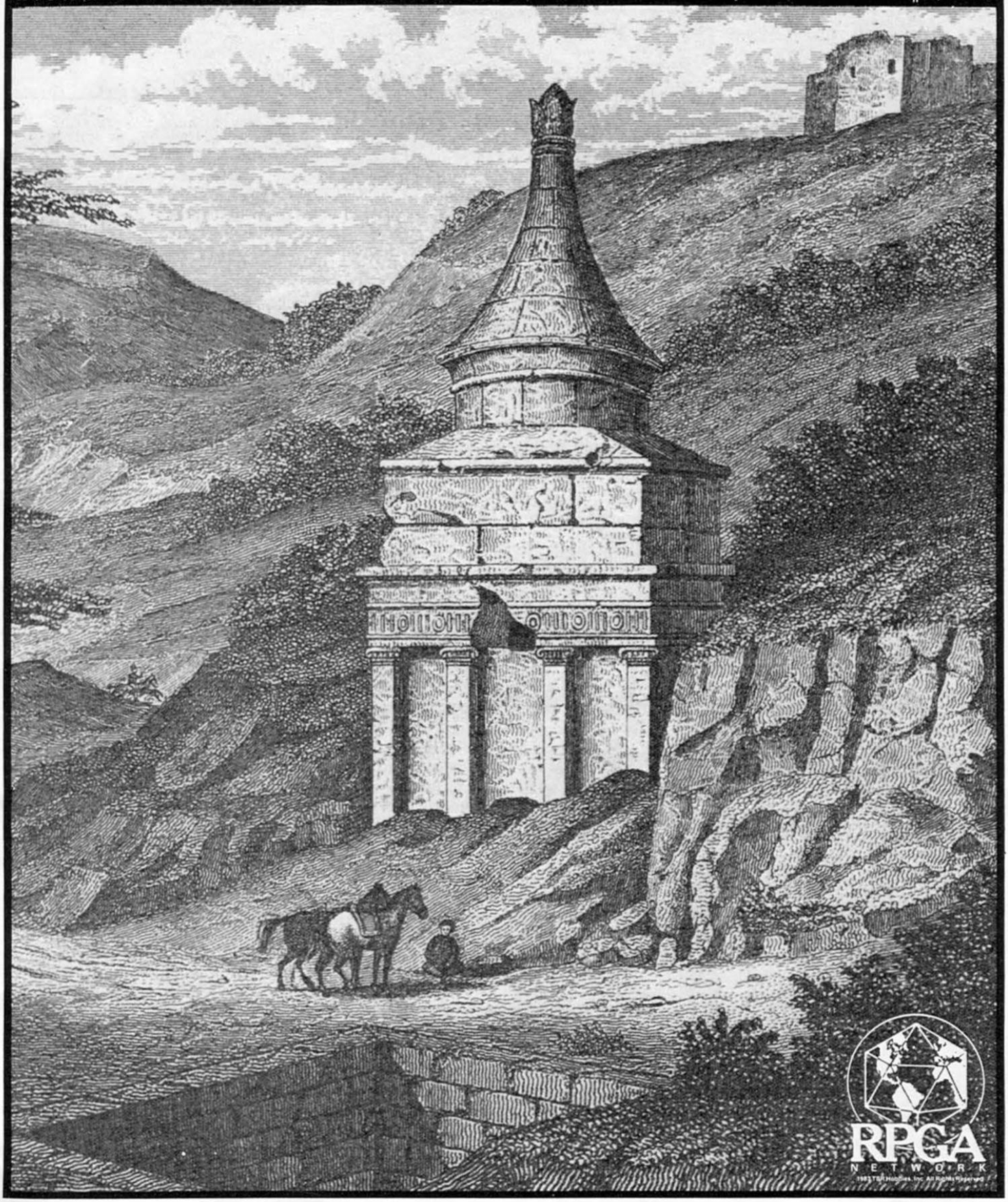

RPGA NETWORK

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POLYHEDRON™

NEWSZINE
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. . . from the editor

Welcome to POLYHEDRON™ Newszine issue #17. We've got another mini-module for you: Part 6 in the epic series *Prophecy of Brie, The Incants of Ishcabeble*. The story continues. . . .

This issue's *Encounters*, written by Kim Eastland, uses a 19th century engraving as its basis. This article is more like a cross between an *Encounters* and an *Under Construction*. The party comes upon an unmarked temple and pit, and discovers some clues to "unlock" the mystery. We used actual engravings of items for the illustrations of the treasure, so the party can see what they're getting.

Jim Ward has detailed another Cryptic Alliance, the *Knights of Genetic Purity*, to flush out your GAMMA WORLD® game campaign. If you've got a favorite alliance you'd like detailed soon, send me a note and I'll pass it on to Jim.

In *Notes for the DM*, Roger Moore tackles the subject of variants, house rules, and hybrid games. Every campaign has a few of its own rules; Roger provides some good ideas on how to avoid the pitfalls that can follow this practice.

We've come up with another potential continuing column, which proposes to outline the archetypical character of a particular character class; for instance, James T. Kirk is the archetypical starship captain. This idea was designed for players to measure or modify their characters by, but they'd also make good NPCs.

Following these archetypical characters is a sidebar containing two or more characters contributed by members. We're looking for balanced characters which do not violate the rules of the game. Don't send us every character you've ever played: we're looking for one or two of your best. Unfortunately, we don't have the staff to comment on all of the characters we receive, so make 'em good ones, and we'll try to get them into print in the newszine. I'll need some for the next issue, so man your typewriters and send information about your favorite player character in right away (see page 23).

Member Nicholas Moschovakis submitted a clever TOP SECRET® game article on disguised weapons that use everyday objects. Even if you don't play the game, if you've ever seen a James Bond movie you'll enjoy reading about the weapons.

If you've ever been told that your *Wish* couldn't do what you wanted it to you won't miss Kim Mohan's article on *Wishes*. Similarly, if you're a DM whose losing either enthusiasm or control, you'll want to read *DM Talk*, by Carl Smith.

That about wraps up the features for this issue. Keep sending those letters.— Mary

Hey you in Los Angeles!

Member Dov Freedman is starting an RPGA Network club and wants members from the greater Los Angeles area. He's moved, so write to him at 321 North Sycamore, Los Angeles, CA 90036, or call him between 7:00 and 11:00 at (213) 934-7562.

Classifieds

If you're looking for other gamers, send us the vital information, including name and address (and phone number if you like) in 20 words or less and we'll put it in the magazine.

Please type or print your classified legibly exactly as you want it to appear.

RPGA™ NETWORK GEN CON® XVII GAME FAIR TOURNAMENT

Plans are now being laid for the RPGA™ Network tournament for GEN CON XVII Game Fair. We will be needing a staff of qualified and experienced DMs. RPGA Network members wishing to participate as DMs should contact the tournament coordinator:

Doug Behringer
1545 Worthington
Columbus, OH 43201

WANTED

Judges and Players

ORIGINS 84
June 21-24 Dallas, TX

For more information, write:

ORIGINS 84
P.O. 59899
DALLAS, TX 75229

Cartoon Contest winners

We received over 350 entries to POLYHEDRON™ Newszine's Cartoon contest. Our panel of judges, Kim Eastland, Kim Mohan, Roger Moore, Patrick Price, Charles Ramsay, and Jim Ward, had a tough time picking just one winner, so we picked three. They are:

- Shane Huang, Petaluma, CA.: "Alright . . . who tied the slipknot?"
- Stephen Sumner, Waterbury, CT.: "Got any +2 band-aids?"
- Kenny Glover, Birmingham, AL.: "There's no place like home. (click) There's no place like home. (click) There's no place like. . . ."

Shane, Stephen, and Kenny will receive 1 year subscriptions to DRAGON® Magazine. Congratulations to the winners, and thanks to everyone who participated.

Letters

Didn't like #16

I did not like issue #16 of POLYHEDRON™ Newszine. I must admit that the articles were well written, but that is the problem. There were only articles in the newszine.

Dear friends, I am not a member of the RPGA™ Network in order to get a second helping of articles every other month. DRAGON® Magazine does a good job monthly. I am a member of the network to interact with others who play games. I do not care how poorly the others write. I still want to read their ideas and opinions. I want them to be able to read my ideas and opinions (some might be useful). Some editing might be needed (we are not professional writers). We are people who joined a special association of special people (role players) and we want to interact amongst ourselves. Please allow space for our ideas to see print.

Roby Ward
Pineville, LA

First, I must say that I'm pleased to have received a letter, even a negative one, with so much conviction. I must also admit that I share your concern over this issue, but I'd like to point out a few things that you may not have considered in your evaluation.

Not every POLYHEDRON Newszine reader subscribes to DRAGON Magazine. Further, the articles contained in #16 were all written by RPGA Network members in good standing. Jim Ward, Carl Smith, Roger Moore, Kim Eastland, and myself are all RPGA Network members, and we're members because we want to be, not just because we happen to work for TSR. We play games just like other RPGA Network members.

Quite some time ago, POLYHEDRON Newszine introduced a column called *Two Cents*; it was created to house the ideas, comments, tricks, traps, etc., that weren't long enough, or even intended to be articles in and of themselves. We received a few, some of which were published, but the majority of the responses received (which weren't many), especially tricks and traps, were just not suitable for publication. Although this column has by no means been dropped, it is included on a semi-regular basis determined by the availablity of material.

You may be wondering what "not suitable for publication" means. Things which are so poorly written that they'd require an inordinate amount of editing to make sense, game-related items which violate the rules of that game, or things which we believe too few people would be interested in, are called "not suitable for publication." Granted, these are value judgements, but that's what editors of magazines do . . . someone has to or the magazine wouldn't get done. Sometimes we're wrong — and hopefully someone calls the oversight to our attention.

No magazine (that I know of, anyway) publishes everything it receives simply because someone sent it in. Decisions about content are based on many considerations: survey results, communications with members (including members within TSR), available manuscripts, quality of manuscripts, available time, etc.

The point of the matter is is that we've tried to devote a lot more space toward members' ideas and such, but we just haven't received many in the past. You may find it interesting, if not alarming, to hear that given all of the strictures placed on the "suitablity" of work, most of what we receive we accept, which should also tell you how much we actually get.

Before I offend those who have sent in manuscripts, we do currently have a number of manuscripts on hand, *Encounters*, and general topics, and those are being doled out one or two per issue (if you've sent a manuscript with an SASE and haven't heard anything yet, you will). Last issue's *Encounters* was written by member Doug Behringer. Included in this issue is a marvelous article by Nicholas Moschovakis. We've had a number of others in the past.

We'd truly like to have more contributions from members in POLYHEDRON Newszine, and have in fact designed a new slot in it for you to contribute your favorite player characters (see page 23), but if enough of you want even more than the already existing *Two Cents*, regular feature articles by members, and the player characters section, send 'em in and we'll print the best of 'em as they are, within reason. Keep in mind that we cannot print something which violates the intent or rules of the game, or is in poor taste. Use your best judgement. If you're seriously interested in submitting work for publication in any of Dragon Publishing's periodicals, look over the *Letters* section in POLYHEDRON Newszine #15, and send for Dragon Publishing's Writer's Guidelines as mentioned in #16.

Thanks for your concern — it's the only way we have of knowing what you want. If anyone has further thoughts on this subject, we'd love to hear them. This truly is your newszine. — MK

Problem players

There are some players in our group who have developed characters in various campaigns over the last three years, and have risen to as high as 11th level. Their players are understandably attached to them, but I think that the situation has gotten out of hand.

Each time something happens to one of these characters, no matter how trivial or temporary, the person playing the character gets very upset and sometimes acts as if he or she is being picked on. I've seen reactions ranging from pouting and mild depression to excessive anger. It bothers me that the game is being taken so seriously. I've said as much on a couple of occasions and received very hateful glares and remarks.

These are good players and equally good friends. I realize that losing a character is no fun, but I dread the thought of something happening to a cherished character. Is there any way that I can get these people to not take the game so seriously (preferably without actually saying so)? Or has the situation gone too far for us to change their attitudes?

Paul Cherry
Oklahoma City, OK

Situations like the one you describe have occurred in my own gaming groups as well. If a player looks like he's getting too attached to a character, then you can either: 1) start a campaign with all new characters, making him roll up a new one, too; 2) stop inviting the person to the game sessions (if this can be pulled off); 3) set up adventures in which there's lots of intrigue, but little risk of death; or 4) sit down with the person and be honest with him. Ask them what they think of the campaign, how they feel about things happening to their characters, etc. Point out that bad things happen to all characters at some time or the other, but that this is a game. Point out that you want to be fair, but if they are having trouble with things, maybe they should take a break from gaming for a while.

Role playing is much like any other game. People who get too involved in winning football games, in winning card games, or in keeping their characters alive in role-playing games all need to realize that they are making the game less fun for everyone else, just as the game is becoming less fun for them. When people take everything in a game personally, nothing goes right.

Talking to the person about the problem often helps. Rather than hitting him in the face with it, you can approach the problem in a roundabout way, as suggested above. Maybe he would like the game to be run differently, which could be arranged if someone else could be the DM for a while and the group could get a variety of referees. If this isn't helping, though, and it looks like the person is going to be a problem player, it may come down to asking him to not game with the group until he changes his attitude.

I was pretty sensitive about having one of my characters fail a poison saving throw when a giant snake bit him. He was the first character out of twenty that made it up to 6th level, and then he opened the wrong door. I was ticked off for half an hour before it occurred to me that I was looking pretty stupid to everyone else in the game, and I rolled up another character.

After that, I was able to separate things and everyone had a better time. Last year, my 16th-level half-ogre (John Grond, the one I toot about in some of the articles I write) got toasted by a *meteor swarm*. I felt a sense of loss, but I picked up the reins by role-playing his henchogre and after a few minutes everything was fine. Easy come, easy go, as the adventurers say. Grond was brought back, which helped, but if he hadn't been restored to "life" I would still feel okay about it. I think he's great, but I can come up with new characters just as good (if not better) with a few rolls of the dice. — Roger Moore

Encounters

by Kim Eastland

The scenario

Nearing the end of your journey to the ruins of a castle known as Evermore, your party chances upon a strange and unexpected sight. To the left of the road is a large, man-made pit. To the right is a crumbling structure not unlike a temple. In front of the temple sleeps a male servant holding the reins of two fine horses. If the dozing servant and fine horses aren't enough to catch your attention, the structure you face is not marked on your map. Milard, the map-making thief who generally provides you with your maps, is usually reliable in these matters.

You check your map again. Sure enough, the ruins of the castle sit high upon the hill above you, but you find no sign of the temple-like structure before you. Although this road is a seldom traveled one, surely a structure of this size would have been noted. Shrugging, you give in to the suggestion to take a break, and possibly enjoy a bit of snooping.

The servant

Naturally, the servant will be terrified at the sight of a band of mercenaries gaping at him, however, calm and sensible reassurances will settle him. If this approach is taken, he will tell the party all he knows.

1. He is the servant of a young adventurer named Hagee. They were lost and came upon this place two nights ago. The servant's name is Murp.
2. His master decided early the next morning (about 30 hours ago), that he might find something of value inside the building, so he crawled in through the big crack in the front center of the building. He has not yet returned.
3. Murp doesn't know what to make of his master's delay. Although anxious for his safe return, he isn't overly concerned as his master has disappeared for longer periods of time in the past.
4. Early the previous evening a peasant family passed by. Murp tried to converse with them, but a combination of the language barrier and their insistence on passing quickly made any meaningful dialogue impossible. Only a few words or phrases were clear to him: "taboo," "vile and slimy," "temple of doom," and something about a "collie."

figure C

The illustration above depicts the original entrance to the temple. A huge metal plate covers the oddly-shaped doorway. The figure to the left of the door demonstrates the door's height.

5. Murp hasn't heard or seen anything from the temple or the pit.

The temple

There are no doors or windows in the building. There are no tracks or signs of wildlife at all around the building within a radius of 100′, except for those of the party, or presumably, Hagee's.

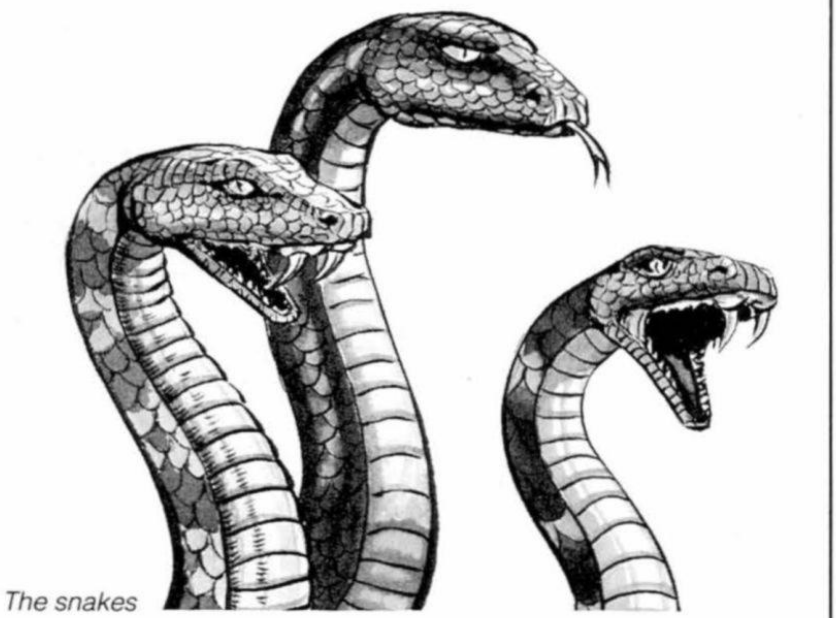
figure A

figure B

Any character passing through the opening into the building will immediately see a fallen fighter with something wrapped around him. Closer inspection will reveal that the corpse (which matches the description of Hagee) was bitten by a rather large poisonous snake, now loosely wrapped around the body; the snake is minus its head.

The inside of the temple is 35 square feet of open space. If asked, the DM should describe the temple's interior as in a state of terrible decay. It appears that this may have been quite posh at one time, but no signs of any religious symbols are left. Markings in the middle of the floor indicate that there might have been some solid structure here, perhaps an altar, at one time.

If the room is throughly searched, the characters will find a secret trapdoor in the floor and another in the ceiling, both perfectly centered, (the one in the floor is exactly where the altar may have been). The door in the floor is a decayed secret door which cannot be opened intact. If it is dug out or disintegrated away, it will reveal a remarkably thick stone-blocked floor (actually a thick ceiling). The door in the ceiling *appears* to be made of wood and still in relatively good condition. Actually, one good blow will send the rotting planks crashing to the floor, followed by five thick snakes, each about 15′ long.



The snakes

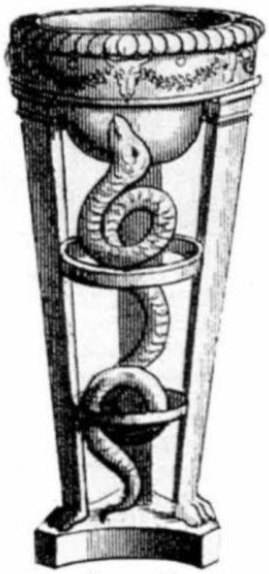


figure D

These snakes are descendants of the original ones kept in the temple decades ago. Though usually tropical in nature, they have adapted to this climate and have lost none of their natural abilities. Two of the snakes are constrictors (pg. 111, *MM II*), and three are boalisks (pg. 19, *MM II*), but it's impossible for any but a druid to tell them apart in here. The light of day peeping through the cracks provides enough light for the boalisks' gaze to be seen.

If, after the battle, the ceiling area is searched, an old metal tankard with a snake motif will be found (figure A). If the tankard is moved it will be evident that something metal is inside — a strange key that is unlike any other ever seen by the party members (figure B).

Except for Hagee's personal belongings (chain mail shirt, shield, and +1 sword) nothing else of value can be found.

The pit

The pit is 25 square feet at the top and is obviously constructed from blocks. A *Light* spell cast on an item and dropped down the pit will show that it is well over 100′ deep, and seems to be made of natural rocks (rather than blocks) towards the bottom. As a matter of fact, the pit opens up after 100′ and the sides of the last hundred or so feet cannot even be seen. If the edge of the pit is searched by a ranger or druid, there are signs that there was once a large wooden structure here, possibly a winch.

If the characters desire to descend into the pit by rope, 225′ will be needed. At the 100′ mark, characters will be attacked by the pit's inhabitants, a swarm of jaculi (pg. 53, *Fiend Folio*). The walls of the natural cavern are honeycombed with tunnels and holes perfectly suited for the 20 jaculi to project themselves from, like javelins. They'll strike their targets or fall (or both), then crawl in a hole to begin their long climb upwards to their nests. The entire process will take them at least ten minutes. No more than ten jaculi will strike in any one melee round; although their bites aren't particularly damaging, the DM should determine the effects of the attack on anyone holding onto a rope, climbing, etc.

Once at the bottom of the pit, the original entrance to the temple is revealed (figure C), an ornate wall covered with ancient runes. This wall will appear to be magical to a *Detect Magic* (it has an unusual *Preservation* spell cast on it to prevent decay and erosion). A huge metal plate covers the doorway, and a strange keyhole is above it. The key from the ceiling of the temple fits this lock. If a thief attempts to pick the lock, a -50% to his chance will apply due to the age and complexity of the lock. If *Detect Traps* is attempted at this time, a trip mechanism for releasing something from above inside the doorway will be detected.

The trap is an iron cobra (*Fiend Folio*), but the poor thing died years ago and will now just plop down in a pile of rust, most likely scaring the wits out of unsuspecting party members.

Inside the doorway is a 20 square foot antechamber with another obviously decayed iron cobra in the middle. Inside this iron cobra, however, are three poisonous snakes (*MM II*, pg. 111), who are more than willing to let the party pass, but if they are disturbed by someone hacking or kicking at the rusty cobra, the snakes will immediately attack. The DM should roll their poison effects randomly.

Past the antechamber is a huge tunnel that twists endlessly into the darkness. To the right is a large cave with a firestand at the entrance (figure D). One minute after the brazier is lit, the fireside that has magically been laid into the metalwork as a trap will come to life and attack if given the chance (*Fiend Folio*, pg. 38). Under the coals is a ruby which resembles the coals because of its sooty covering. It belongs to the firesnake.

The cave is shallow but wide; a carved marble chest (figure E) can be seen in its depths. A *Detect Traps* cast on the chest will show nothing, but a *Detect Magic* spell will indicate that it has magical properties (again, the magical preservation). The chest is easily opened; the contents include an oil lamp (figure F), one scroll case (figure G), some sort of pipelike musical instrument (figure H), and a matched set of armbands (figure I).

Behind the chest lies a small but expensive-looking goblet (figure J). This item is a magical trap in that it will shatter if touched, and that sound will awaken the giant amphisbaena snake lying just out of sight in the winding tunnel (pg. 88, *MM*). This snake has been down here since the temple was built, and it is *huge* (HP 60, MV 15″, AC 2, Bite 1-6). It will move toward the party immediately upon hearing the shattering noise or the pipelike musical instrument.

Once the snake is defeated, the party can loot what they will and leave (but remember that any jaculi left alive will now be in place for more attacks). Nothing else but the bones of past victims lie within the tunnel.

The treasure

1. Pewter mug, worth 450gp.
2. Ruby, worth 1,250 gp.
3. Carved marble chest (very heavy), worth 1,000gp.
4. Silver ornate oil lamp (when rubbed will grant one *Wish*), worth 6,000gp unrubbed, 1,000 gp rubbed.
5. Scroll case (six scrolls containing 2 *Snake Charm* spells, 2 clerical *Sticks to Snakes* spells, and 2 *Neutralize Poison* spells). Total worth, 6,000gp.
6. *Pipe of Snake Summoning* (as druidic spell *Animal Summoning II*, but only for snakes; can be used twice per day), worth 3,500gp.
7. *Armbands of Snake-changing* (as magic-user's *Polymorph Self* spell, but can only change to some form of snake if both are worn, once per day), worth 2,500gp.

The history of the temple

A subcult of Kali formed their temple here centuries ago (thus the confused reference to "collie" by the peasants), but focused more on the associated snakes than on the goddess. After awhile Kali became aware of this and expressed her displeasure by destroying all within the temple but the snakes. Meanwhile, one of the order who had been up to Evermore Castle (extracting blackmail money, no doubt) returned with some valued items. Discovering the destruction of the temple, he fearfully hid the loot and himself down in the pit where the most holy giant snake was kept. Eventually the priest became supper for the amphisbaena, and the treasure was left behind.

If the DM desires he can have the tunnel stretch back into the hillside until it opens up into the dungeons of Evermore Castle. This could provide a whole new adventuring area for the party. Maybe even some of the other snakes have slithered up to the castle and are waiting for lunch.

figure E

figure I

figure F

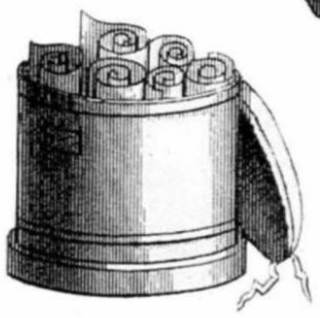


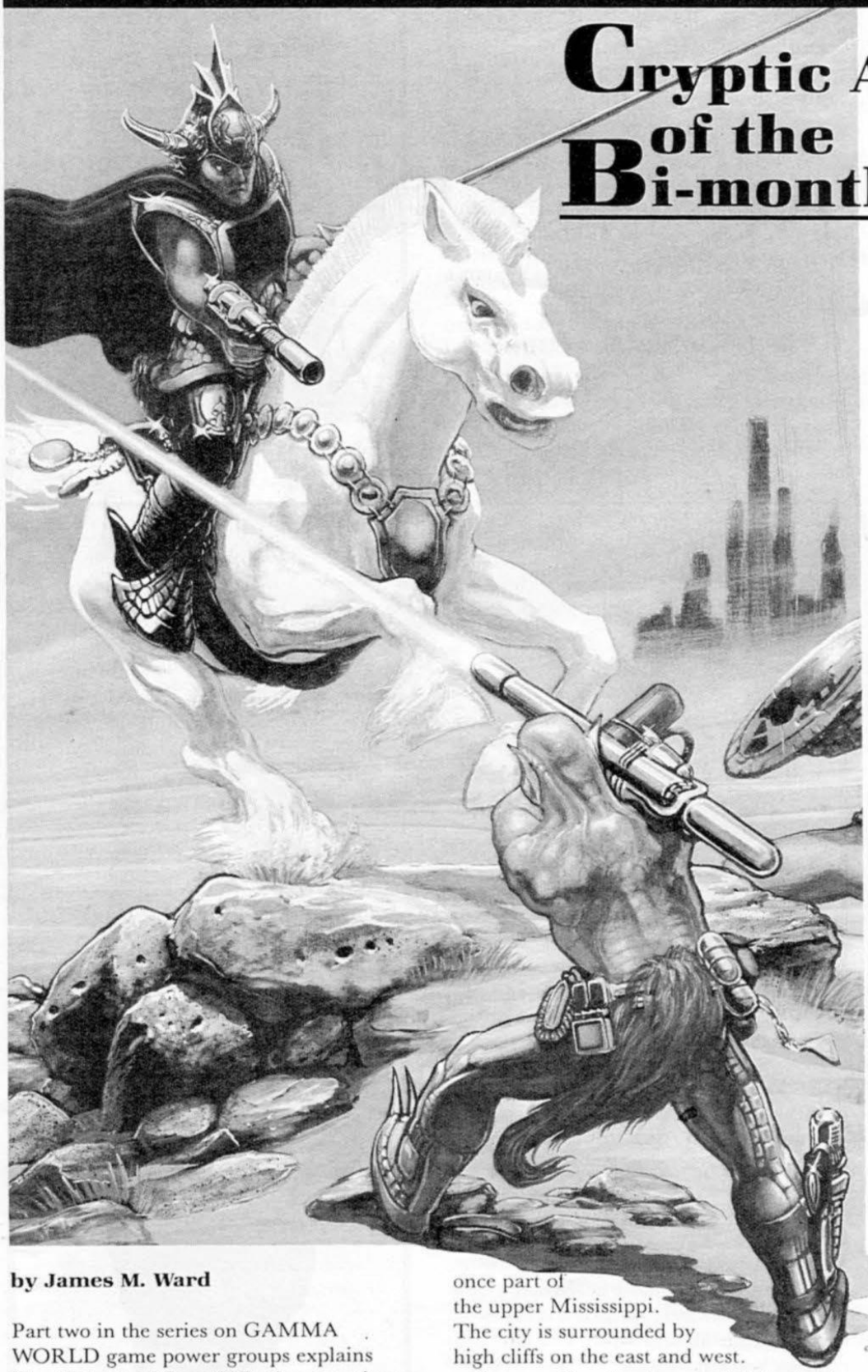
figure G

figure H

figure J

Cryptic Alliance of the Bi-month

Knights of Genetic Purity



by James M. Ward

Part two in the series on GAMMA WORLD game power groups explains *The Knights of Genetic Purity,* sometimes known as *Purists*, one of the most famous — and feared — alliances on the planet.

Geographic Location

The main base of the *Knights of Genetic Purity* is a huge, almost medieval city named Prar along the banks of what was once part of the upper Mississippi. The city is surrounded by high cliffs on the east and west.

Surrounding the city are slightly developed hills and valleys sparsely populated by pure strain humans. These areas have remained, for the most part, unmolested by other maurading groups, mainly because they are hard to reach. Further, the only thing around to attract other intelligent races is the city of Prar, thus these areas have on occasion been used as pathways for invasion.

Inhabitants

The population of the entire city of Prar is approximately 5,000. However, within the city of Prar is a walled Citadel which houses the majority of the Knights in residence. At any given time there are 500 Knights here prepared for battle. Outside the Citadel, in the city proper, are any number of youngsters and older residents who would be willing to fight in the event of attack, but they would prove pretty ineffectual.

History

The development of the city of Prar is a direct result of the fact that it was left virtually untouched (in comparison to other areas, anyway) during and after the Dark Time. Although the survivors couldn't maintain an understanding of the technology of the Ancients, they fell back to the very basic, but functional, concepts of the Middle Ages. Attacks by men and mutants necessitated the building of castlelike structures and walls.

Also as a result of these attacks, a strong alliance of men, later known as *Knights of Genetic Purity,* totally dedicated to the destruction of all intelligent mutants evolved. The *Purists* perceived that mutants were largely to blame for the Dark Times, and therefore deserved their hatred. These early Knights were able to maintain some of the weapon technology of the Ancients, which increased their ability to destroy, especially since the rest of the world was reduced to using arrows and swords.

In the modern day GAMMA WORLD game, the scarcity of materials dictates that only the highest ranks of the Knights are allowed to use advanced weapons freely. The lower orders must find their own in the ruins or wait their chance to rise in the power structure of the Knights.

The *Knights of Genetic Purity* seek to increase their numbers by destroying all those intelligent races which similarly strive for dominance, and by massing all the pure strain humans together in areas

to multiply and grow strong. The alliance has been very successful at this because they are almost always the most organized and disciplined group. This allows them to focus their efforts in ways alien to almost all other intelligent species.

Prar is always ready for battle. Unlike the areas in the surrounding hills, Prar is constantly under attack by powerful mutants; it frequently takes the weapons of the Ancients to kill or drive them off.

Leader of the Knights

Jon Law

HIT POINTS: 150
RANK: 20
MS: 17
IN: 14
DX: 17
PS: 10
CH: 30
CN 18
ARMOR CLASS: 2 (Powered plate)
WEAPONS: (short range) Black ray pistol (WC: 15); Energy mace (WC: 5) (long range) Fusion rifle (WC: 16)

DESCRIPTION: Jon is 29 years old and became the leader of the Knights when he successfully found and delivered a huge cache of Ancient weapons to the Citadel. He is the best of a young breed of Warrior/Scientists who are not only interested in fighting and destroying all intelligent mutants in the world but also in developing scientific principles that will further the *Knights of Genetic Purity.*

Jon's main interests lie in maps of the Ancients. He has a collection of over one hundred and pays well for new ones to add to his collection. Known for his skill as a fighter and courage during battle, Jon is the uncontested leader of the warrior society of the Knights.

Jon has a personal guard of 50 Knights armed with weapons of the Ancient; they often go into the surrounding areas on search and destroy missions against the few mutants who have tried to settle within two hundred kilometers of Prar.

Jon is currently working on a project to strengthen the Citadel against all possible forms of attack. Within the last three months mutants have breached the walls of the town with high explosives and Jon has ordered that the walls of his castle be made stronger with whatever duralloy could be found in the area.

Because of his own rapid rise from the ranks, Jon is very aware of the actions and motivations of younger warriors. He often takes a special interest in the best of these young Knights and brings them into his personal guard, a two rank jump.

Defenses of the Citadel

The Citadel's outer defenses depend on the people of the walled city of Prar. Theoretically, while the walled city remains strong, the Citadel does not stand in immediate danger of invasion. The wall surrounding the city of Prar is 12′ high. The Citadel itself has a 30′ wall with all of the classical Medieval defenses:

a. Vats with boiling oil.
b. Catapults with huge stones and special fire bombs.
c. A large supply of crossbows and missiles.
d. Narrow arrow slits for the safety of the bowmen.
e. A heavy, single gate into the Citadel.
f. A second circle of walls in the event that the Citadel's main entrance is breached.

Base interior chambers

There are about 100 rooms in the interior chambers. Here can be found the living quarters for all Knights with rank above 5. There are armories for weapons, both Ancient and newly made, chambers for storage of food and equipment important to the Citadel, and the grand assembly hall for the leader and his men.

Behind the assembly hall are the chambers for Jon and his wife. They are filled with the most important discoveries of the Ancients and guarded by a security robot that only Jon and two other scientists are able to activate and deactivate.

The outside walls hold the barracks for the remainder of the Knights, the sheds for the brutorz and other mounts, and the work rooms for fixing and making the everyday items needed for life in the Citadel.

Concepts and policies

The *Knights of Genetic Purity* alliance operates under a feudal system. Jon is the king; he has two dukes and four counts who assist him. This structure follows true down through the ranks; the three lowest-ranked Knights are considered squires until they perform brave acts for the alliance.

Although fighting between Knights is allowed during struggles for power, this is strictly forbidden when there are mutant power groups in the area. Knights are expected to follow the direction of all higher-ranking Knights, and cowardice is strictly punished on all levels. Success in battle is more important than success in acquiring material goods, but Jon's policies have slightly modified this.

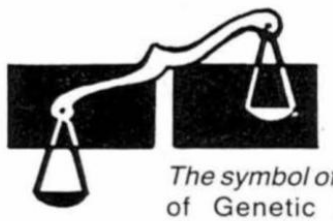
Materials common to outside bases

All Knight groups spring from, congregate around, or develop existing castles or stone fortresses. The primary goal of newly-formed groups is to develop the structure into a full-fledged castle for defense and appearance. All castles have a lord of at least the sixth rank and he has 20 followers of at least the third rank.

Knights are fond of missile weapons of all types and there are always some available to outside bases. The heavy crossbow is a favorite castle defense, and these weapons are able to hit with accuracy at a distance of up to several hundred meters.

Knights appreciate the clothing of the Ancients and dress in such things whenever they are found. This does make them popular with Yexils, however.

Knights wear a red square emblazoned on their shields, armor or clothes as a sign of identification. Their standard flag displays an unbalanced scale of justice to demonstrate their unyielding commitment to racial purity, although some smaller bands may also include the form of some mutant that has bothered the Knights and been defeated.



The symbol of the Knights of Genetic Purity: *an unbalanced scale.*

All Knight centers have brutorz that are raised for battle.

Legends

Their most popular legend deals with one of their number from Ancient history called Pul Banyon. This seven foot tall hero was reported to use a double-bladed axe to sweep hundreds of his enemies aside in battle. It is said that this fighter rode a giant blue Racox into war and was only defeated by the use of technology by some mutant race of little people. They say that to this day Pul wanders the Northlands slaying mutants by the forestful.

Another legend deals with a king named Art who pulled a glowing Vibro Blade out of a stone and used it to kill huge lizard mutants that breathed fire on helpless women. This story further details how the king foolishly married a human-looking mutant girl who later betrayed him with one of his best fighters.

VARIANTS, HOUSE RULES AND HYBRIDS

by Roger E. Moore

Long-time readers of POLYHEDRON™ Newszine may recall a moderately heated letter in issue #11, in which a reader expressed his feelings about "official" games and variant games, and how it didn't matter what rules people gamed with so long as everyone was having fun. This column is an elaboration on the subject of variant gaming, and variant AD&D™ gaming in particular.

Much emphasis has been placed in articles in POLYHEDRON Newszine and in DRAGON® Magazine on why it's better to game with the rules as they are, without adding or altering anything. Much can be said in favor of this idea. When you use the rules as they are, you develop a better understanding for the game system as a whole, how the parts fit together and interrelate. One plays the game the designer had in mind, and the designer might know more about what makes a good role-playing game than the player does.

So why change anything? Because no two people are alike, and everyone has different ideas on what makes a game fun. Thus is born the host of variant, hybrid, and just plain weird versions of the AD&D game that have spread across the world. I play variant, weird AD&D games, too.

This article is not advocating that every DM or player in the world should start playing variant or hybrid AD&D games. It is worth looking over some of the variant forms that AD&D games take, and pointing out some of the problems associated with them, as well as some of the positive ways in which the variants and hybrids may benefit a campaign.

Critical hits

Critical hits and hit location tables are unofficial rules additions that have been with D&D® and AD&D games for years and years. Several other role-playing game systems produced by other companies use hit location tables for game combat, determining what part of a combatant's body or equipment is damaged in a fight. Critical hits (especially damaging blows that produce immediate bad results for a combatant, such as having one's arm chopped off) are also fairly popular. Some game systems even use fumble tables, showing what happens if one misses a blow badly according to the die roll. Fumbling may result in a dropped weapon, striking an opponent, or harming oneself severely.

The AD&D game already has certain minor critical hit, hit location, and fumble rules hidden away within it. On page 28 of the revised Dungeon Masters Guide is a note on strikes against opponents who aren't wearing helmets. Certain weapons such as a *Sword of Sharpness* are able to lop off limbs and heads on special rolls. Beholders are attacked according to a hit location table, and other monsters like hydras and carrion crawlers have descriptions that make it clear that where one lands a blow on them is important. Then, of course, there's the *Fumble* spell, with a few magical items related to it.

However, these rules do not dominate the game. Combat proceeds without worrying about where one has been injured or whether one's arms and legs are still attached (in most cases, anyway). When critical hit results are applied to AD&D game combat, the primary result is that combat becomes much shorter and deadlier all around.

In one game I refereed long ago, I adopted critical hits with the group's permission and ran some adventures that way. We were all rather surprised at how quickly the game changed. An 8th-level dwarven fighter had his head mashed in on the second round of a fight with some lycanthropes, when he had not lost any hit points previously. He was dead and out of the game for good. That did not please the player. We dropped the system in future games. One could set it up so that only player characters were allowed to get critical hits, but this is patently riding the game in the player characters' favor, and the Dungeon Master might just as well make everyone 20th-level right from the very start.

Critical hit tables aren't necessarily bad, but they will dramatically change combat into a less-than-desirable option. If you like high-risk "realism" (though many critical hit tables aren't very realistic), then this might work well in your campaign. Just don't get too attached to your characters. . . .

The same may be said of fumble tables. Granted, if you've ever watched staged combats between armor-clad members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, you know that people can do some awfully weird things while trying to hit an opponent. However, once again most fumble tables will do little more than shorten your character's lifespan abruptly ("Cut his leg off? How could my character cut his leg off when he was aiming at the troll??!!"). Mild fumble tables, those that have characters drop their weapons or be temporarily unable to defend themselves, might work out a little better than those having characters maim themselves or other characters, but that's often a matter of taste.

Hit location tables . . . actually, hit location tables have some appeal. Just where *did* Bimbo the Barbarian take fifteen points of damage from the giant lizard bite? Hit location tables would allow for odd shapes of armor, mixtures of armor (such as a chain mail shirt with leather trousers and no helmet), and and might add a little more "zing" to one's characters ("This scar on my arm? Oh, that's where the giant lizard bit me.")

One problem still remains. No matter how much fun or how "realistic" critical hit, fumble, or hit location tables are in play, they have one general disadvantage. They slow down the flow of the game. It has been said of some role-playing games on the market that a single sword swing takes twenty minutes to complete, due to the complex maze of tables and charts that must be consulted for hit location, attack method, critical hits, defender's stance, etc. When people are sitting down to a fantasy role-playing game, they want to hack the orc and be done with it; if a

round of combat takes longer than five minutes to play out, people are going to get very, very bored, and the game will suffer for it.

In short, keep tables like those above short and playable if you want to use them. Be prepared to alter the tables as your group playtests them, so that the game plays fast enough to keep everyone's interest.

Variant character classes

DRAGON® Magazine has printed numerous unofficial character classes for the AD&D™ game in the past, and it isn't unusual to run into a few Antipaladins, Ninjas, Berserkers, Timelords, and Duelists here and there. Sadly, I must confess to a personal weakness for variant character classes, and I've made up a few of them myself.

The problems in using variant classes, however, must be overcome first. All new character classes should be treated with kid gloves in gaming sessions, and given a careful going-over. A class might prove exceptionally powerful and unbalancing, or might turn out unpopular for its weaknesses. Powerful classes, of course, will get the most favorable response, though often an initially good response will turn sour over time.

DRAGON Magazine carried an interesting NPC called the Witch, in issue #43, that we tested out as a player character. The witch receives an extraordinary number of spells at low levels, and we found this changed the game in favor of witches over magic-users. Witches, with their unusual spells, were also difficult to "get rid of," and we finally dropped it from use as a PC. As an NPC, however, the class makes a nice, challenging opponent, a change from the usual low-level spellcasters. The power of the class is balanced by the numbers and resourcefulness of the player characters.

In my experience, the Ninja class seems to be the most popular of all variant classes for the AD&D game, but there are as many versions of the class as there are players. It is a rare month that goes by at Dragon Publishing without at least one or two manuscripts detailing Ninja NPCs or PCs appearing in the mailbox. One of the problems with Ninjas, however, is that most of the versions do not look substantially different from the Assassin class, or else they seem to be crosses of Monks, Fighters, Assassins, and Thieves all at once. New character classes should be as original as possible, so as not to overlap or duplicate existing classes to an extreme.

No matter how fun or "realistic" critical hit, fumble or hit location tables are . . . they slow down the flow of the game.

If variant classes are to be used in a campaign, a careful eye should be kept on the class during play to pick out flaws, missing information, and problems with balance. It might be worth running a few NPCs of a certain class by the DM, as a sort of "dry run" before letting players try it out.

Combat and clerical turn-away tables

Some referees, seeing that the clerical turn-away table in the *DMG* does not seem to follow a straightforward progression of some kind, have developed their own tables for use in their campaigns. Combat tables are often modified as well, to change the "to hit" scores of one or more classes.

This is very tricky stuff. Theoretically, you could (as the *DMG* notes) alter the turn-away table to make it harder for low-level clerics to get rid of tough undead. You could even justify it in some game sense by saying that your game universe is "closer" somehow to the Negative Material Plane than most other Prime Material Planes, making undead stronger.

This variant might not be too bad, so long as the Dungeon Master doesn't abuse it by having lower-level characters run into vampires, liches, and demons very often. If the DM is one of the "killer" types, however, it won't matter much anyway what clerical turn-away table is used, as the Dungeon Master will find some other way to screw up the rules and destroy all the characters he can.

Altering combat tables is a whole 'nuther kettle of fish. An article describing a suggested revision of the combat tables in the *DMG* appeared in DRAGON Magazine issue #80, and it seems to be well put together. It must be emphasized such material is very experimental, and only long playtesting will reveal any flaws in the design. It is worthwhile comparing variant combat tables to the original system, to see who or what gets the advantages, and to make some guesses from that on the changes the tables will bring in play balance.

Even when the tables are replacing a combat system generally acknowledged to be poorly done (as might be said of the weaponless combat system in the *DMG*, which is overly complex and very difficult to moderate), care should be used when applying the system. A variant weaponless combat system that I designed appears in DRAGON issue #83; while it seems to do the job, someone may well write in and point out an aspect of combat that wasn't considered, or some problem in using the system itself. Nothing's perfect, and feedback on suggested variants is extremely important.

Special character abilities

One of the earliest sets of unofficial D&D® game supplements, not published or authorized by TSR, Inc., was the *Arduin Grimoire*. Though this system was eventually expanded into its own separate game system, the first booklets presented a tremendous assortment of variants for the D&D game, most of uneven quality. One of the most interesting variants presented was a list of random character special abilities.

By rolling on the table, one could add new abilities to one's character such as a resistance to fire (because one's father was an efreet), bonuses "to hit" when using certain weapons (often paired with unusual curses, such as a negative modifier used when making saving throws against petrification), and the blessing of tasting bad to monsters, who would spit such characters out if eaten.

As can be guessed from the above, the results of rolling on such tables could produce some very strange characters. Even stranger were tables for personal characteristics, which allowed one to determine skin, hair, and eye color, as well as exotic body shapes. Well I recall one elf in a campaign I was in, who had golden hair, catlike pupils, and a prehensile tail that held a dagger.

This was very amusing, but the overall result was to make the game ridiculous. The idea of gifting certain characters with

special abilities is very interesting and potentially a good idea, but this can also be one of the most unbalancing things that one can add to a campaign if one doesn't take a careful look at what can result.

Special abilities should be assigned, if possible, to fit the nature of the character. It does no good to randomly assign a character a +2 bonus when using a longsword if the character doesn't even use or own the weapon. The power of the special ability should be kept low, to avoid turning the character into SuperDwarf. Non-human races have certain special abilities already, like detecting secret doors or finding stonework traps. It is possible to add a few similar talents to characters, so long as they are of relatively limited nature.

For example, an elven character from a culture that doesn't use swords might have a +1 bonus "to hit" when using a spear instead. The languages that beginning characters know in the campaign could be altered to fit local circumstances (for instance, no goblins live in the area, but lizardmen do and their language is substituted instead). A human character, normal in most other respects, might have a low-grade form of infravision (good to 10′) due to an elven ancestor. The possession of psionics could be considered a special ability in many ways, potentially much more powerful than those listed above, and thus more damaging to play balance. Clerics in particular (judging from the bonuses given them in the "Deities and Demigods of Greyhawk" articles that ran in DRAGON® Magazine issues #67-71) could be given some low-level powers from their respective deities.

As always, if a special ability turns out to be too much for the game to absorb, it can (and should be) toned down or dropped. Feedback is important in figuring out what fits best.

Unusual class and racial mixtures

Some games allow dwarven clerics, halfling barbarians, or elven illusionists to participate in the action. Now if the truth must be told, allowing PCs to have classes they shouldn't have doesn't do a lot of damage to the AD&D™ game system. They function pretty much like all the other characters, and you eventually get used to seeing Burt the Halfling Assassin or Sir Tharon the Dwarven Paladin around. These characters don't come across as more overpowered than any other characters.

The major problem in allowing this is that it breaks down the distinction between races. Halflings were originally conceived of as friendly people, not killers or barbarians; paladins were meant to add more meaning to having human characters. If only humans can be paladins, that makes being a human special. If any lawful good character could be a paladin with the right statistics, then why be a human at all?

If . . . non-human characters have no upper level limits set on them . . . the game takes a distinctly anti-human flavor.

However, as said before, allowing this variant doesn't seem to do a lot of damage to the game, so long as some sort of distinction is still maintained between races. Maybe dwarven paladins can only get to 9th level, just like dwarven fighters. Maybe elven illusionists have the same level restrictions as elven mages.

If all restrictions are taken off, and non-human characters have no upper level limits set on them regardless of class, the game takes a distinctly anti-human flavor. Humans do become pretty useless when elves, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings (not to mention half-orcs) can do everything humans can do, only better. This doesn't come across as very desirable in most campaigns, and will produce a very peculiar-looking game in a short period of time.

Assorted variants and hybrids

Dropping the use of armor-class adjustments for attacks made by certain weapons is something many DMs (including myself) do out of habit. It is difficult to keep track of all the "to hit" variations, though much of the trouble can be eliminated by writing down the appropriate adjustments for the weapons a character carries beforehand on a sheet of paper. Still, you have to ask the DM what armor class the monster is, and he may not want you to know. . . .

Using or not using armor class adjustments doesn't harm the game greatly, either way. It is worth the DM's time to try it both ways, and let referee and players get a feel for how each method works. A decision can be made after some trial runs about keeping or rejecting the adjustments, though if you're willing to spend the time using them, it *is* interesting to see how effective some weapons are against certain armor classes. This could lead to a choosier selection of weapons for adventuring (morning stars and scimitars look especially good against poorly-armored opponents, while flails, footman's picks, and two-handed swords come across well against heavier armors).

Some variants seem to come from misreading the rules. Some Dungeon Masters allow clerics to gain the spells for their wisdom bonuses, including spells they shouldn't get until they reach higher levels. A first-level cleric with an 18 wisdom would then get three 1st-level spells, two 2nd-level spells, one 3rd-level spell, etc. This is just wrong, and drastically unbalances the game in favor of the individual clerics with such benefits.

Some referees give magic-users spell bonuses based on their intelligence, which brings to life the same problem mentioned above with witches. Too many spells for magic-users at low level makes them too powerful; granted, a cleric or druid can get more than one low-level spell, but how many low-level spells are as tough as a *Sleep* spell, a *Magic Missile* (which doesn't miss at all), or *Charm Person*?

Final thoughts

As I've already said, I play variant AD&D games. Halfling assassins, dwarven clerics, and elven fighter/cleric/thieves rub shoulders with ninja and lizardmen in my campaigns. It isn't official, but it's fun.

The point of all this, I suppose, is to get DMs to look carefully at the variants they use. If the system you're using seems to push the game further and further out of alignment, then the system should be dumped. Listen to the players and what they have to say about the variants you've adopted.

And whatever you do, keep in mind the basic intent of the game: It's no good if people aren't having fun. That, in the last analysis, is about all that's important.

For ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Game

RPGA™ NETWORK MODULE 6

THE INCANTS OF ISHCABEBLE

by Bob Blake

An AD&D™ Adventure for 6-10 Characters, Levels 4-7

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THE INCANTS OF ISHCABEBLE

This mini-module was one tournament adventure originally run at the GEN CON® XVI Convention. It is the sixth part of the eight part epic adventure, *Prophecy of Brie*. This scenario can be run in either a tournament or a campaign setting. The Dungeon Master (DM) should read the adventure thoroughly before running it for the players. Background information concerning the *Prophecy of Brie* and the running of these modules was contained in *The Riddle of Dolmen Moor* in POLYHEDRON™ Newszine #16.

STOP! The rest of the information in the module is for the DM's use in running the adventure. If you plan to play in the adventure as a character, stop reading here.

Players' Information

The wards the great wizard Ishcabeble placed must be lifted before the tomb can be entered, and you are now charged with recovering the Incants of Ishcabeble to aid this end. So many of the situations that you have had to deal with have been hampered by the lack of knowledge of Pellham's past, but Ishcabeble is not such a shadowy figure. A wizard of undoubtedly immense power, he is best remembered for his good humor and a penchant for puns and practical jokes. Indeed, his death at the hands of King Dacquiri was the result of a jest at the expense of his majesty, who had no sense of humor. It should be noted that Dacquiri and several members of his court accompanied Ishcabeble to Arawn's Island, for the wizard, faced with extinction, shattered his staff. The resultant explosion is still remembered in folklore as "Ishcabeble's Last Laugh," and one is said to "beble" if one manages to avenge his own death.

Ishcabeble lived at the top of a tall tower about 100 miles northeast of Widdershin in hilly country overlooking the river Damrosil. Valuing his privacy, the tower was constructed to prevent uninvited guests from disturbing him. A series of tests had to be passed in order to reach the top; Ishcabeble figured that anyone smart and strong enough to run this gauntlet was worth talking to. It is not known if the magic still works, but you will find out soon enough. Once at the top of the tower, the Incants (written on parchment) should be easy to find.

Tournament note: Prior to setting out, Jenelle has cast **Continual Light** on a small gem.

DM Information

The tower is a puzzle in itself, and must be solved if the party would arrive at the top without undue damage and loss of time. The door in the base is the only entrance. On Levels Two through Seven, each floor has four color-coded doors. The party must locate and open the correct door on each floor to find the key to the next level.

The mosaic design on the floor of the first level is the party's best clue. If the six-pointed star is viewed as two overlapping triangles (the points of one being colored red, green, and black and the points of the other being brown, purple, and yellow) the proper door is the odd color out. For example, on Level Two the doors are purple, brown, red, and yellow. The party must complete the encounter behind the red door before going to Level Three. The encounters behind the other doors will waste their time and strength.

The light beam: Levels Three through Eight are accessed by a magical light beam. When the gem of the proper color is inserted into the stone collar of the beam, the beam's color changes to that of the gem, and the character can rise to the next level by stepping into the beam. Likewise, the character may descend by thinking "Down" or its equivalent.

Doors: On Levels Two through Eight, all doors open easily. The spaces beyond them are extra-dimensional. When a door is opened, the view beyond is blurred such that no details are visible. Sound does not pass the barrier in either direction. Thus, stepping over the threshold is the only way to find out what lies beyond. A slight tingling is felt when stepping through, though no damage is taken nor are there any after-effects. Unless otherwise stated, all extra-dimensional rooms are 50' cubes.

As was previously mentioned, the doors on each level are color-coded. *Only the correct room is described for each level.* If the wrong door is selected, one of the **Extra Encounters** at the end of this scenario is used instead. The party will face the first encounter on the list upon entering their first incorrect choice, the second encounter for their second mistake, and so on. There are only 10 such encounters because the players will probably be out of time before they reach the end of the list.

Campaign note: Repeat the list or make up something suitable.

The gems from the correct rooms are magical, the gems from the incorrect rooms are not. The latter will NOT function in any of Ishcabeble's magical beams or teleporters.

At midnight each night, the tower resets. The magical gems disappear back to their respective rooms and all guardians are replaced. Non-magical gems are worth 500 gp each.

Tournament note: In each hostile encounter, the party will have one chance to use missiles, wands, and so on before the monsters can close for melee unless specifically stated otherwise.

The characters should NOT regain spells during this adventure.

TOWER EXTERIOR
Level One

The journey upstream from Widdershin is dull and monotonous, and Ishcabeble's Tower is easily found, sitting on a hill overlooking the river. The only excitement was the brief sighting of a party of drow near the river some miles back, though there is no sign of them now.

The tower is octagonal, about 30' per side, and rises to a height of at least 120' above the hilltop. It is constructed of close-fitted, mortared stone. The workmanship is masterful, its like seldom seen nowadays except in homes of the extraordinarily wealthy, like the members of the council. The base of the tower is an unbroken expanse of stone, except for a single ironbound door in the south face.

This door is the only entrance. It is not trapped, and opens easily despite indications that no one has entered in many years. When the party decides to enter, proceed below.

The ground floor is dominated by a huge, circular stone stairway upwards, 30' in diameter. Surrounding it is an elegant mosaic of a six-pointed star, blue outline on a white background, and covering nearly the entire floor. At each point of the star is a circle of color; starting with the one immediately facing the door and going counterclockwise they are black, purple, green, brown, red and yellow. The points are joined by a faint blue line.

As soon as anyone enters, read the following:

As you enter a transparent column of flame bursts from the floor before you and the huge head appears before you, thundering:

If you seek me on the stair
You must find one that isn't there.
Woe will find you linked by threes;
Twice three alone will lead to me.

Then it disappears along with the flames.

The DM should repeat the poem on request. The colors of the mosaic are given out of the order that will be required, forcing the players to solve the puzzle. Note that the joining of the points gives the star the appearance of a large gem, a clue that gems are what the party is looking for.

Level Two

The stairway ends at the second floor. The flooring here is plain stone, and a beam of white light three feet across projects from the floor upward through a three-foot diameter hole in the ceiling. Encircling this beam at waist-height, without visible means of support, is a stone ring, solid except for a two-foot wide gap in the south side. To the left of this opening a 1-inch diameter hole has been incised into the ring, looking like a faceted gem carved in "reverse relief." In each of the diagonal walls of the room is a door. Each door has a translucent six-sided star inset in it at eye level. The stars are colored: northwest — brown, northeast — purple, southeast — red, and southwest — yellow.

To proceed to Level Three, the party needs a red gem, obtainable by going through the door with the red star (3). Nothing can enter the beam of light until the proper gem is inserted into the stone ring.

Room 3: In the center of the room is a glass-topped pedestal enclosing a large ruby. Standing around the pedestal are three salamanders (AC 5/3; MV 9"; HD 7•7; hp 35, 40, 44; #AT 2; THACO 12; D 1-6/2-12; SA 1-6 heat causes 1-6 points additional damage per attack; SD +1 or better to hit, immune to fire, sleep, charm, and hold). They are the guardians of the ruby, and will immediately attack.

If the party enters an incorrect room (1, 2, or 4), turn to the **Extra Encounters** section and use the first encounter. If they enter more than one incorrect room, use the encounters in the order listed.

The ruby precisely fits the hole in the floating stone ring, and when it is inserted the light changes from white to vivid red. The gem falls out of the hole and can be taken with the party. Anyone who steps into the red beam will levitate to the next level.

As characters reach Level Three, their upward progress will stop, and they will have no alternative but to step out of the beam onto the new level. The beam remains red until the next gem is inserted. Otherwise, the descriptions remain the same from here on; the colors of the beam and door stars, the gems required, and the encounters that yield the gem are the only differences.

Level Three

The door stars are: northwest — black, northeast — green, southeast — purple, southwest — red. The beam is red. A purple gem is needed to ascend to Level Four. The gem can be obtained in the encounter behind the purple door (3).

Room 3: The party enters a 30' square room with a 20' high ceiling. A table three feet wide and five feet long stands against the east wall, and on the table is an oil lamp. The lamp is one foot long from tip to handle, and six inches high. The oil reservoir is attached to a short pedestal. The lamp is not lit.

The lamp is magical, and contains a djinni (AC 4; MV 9"/24"; HD 7•3; hp 40; #AT 1; THACO 13; D 2-16; SA whirlwind for 2-12 points of damage). If the lamp is rubbed, the djinni will appear and say that he will grant the party one wish within his power. All the party has to do is ask him to create a purple gem. The djinni can not aid them more, though he may aid them less if they are careless. The party should agree on the wish before the djinni acts.

The request must be carefully worded. For example, if someone says, "Make me a purple gem," the djinni will transform that character into the gem. After the djinni has obeyed one command, he will withdraw into the lamp.

When the purple gem is inserted, the light beam changes to purple and the party can proceed to Level Four.

Level Four

The door star colors are: northwest — black, northeast — brown, southeast — purple, southwest — yellow. The party needs a black gem to proceed to Level Five. The gem can be obtained behind door 1; the light beam will turn black.

Room 1: The room is 30' square. In the middle of the room, a panther-sized black cat lies on a cushion. A black sapphire hangs on a chain around its neck. The cat growls menacingly and attacks immediately.

The cat is a guardian familiar (AC 0; MV 26"; HD 9; hp 49; #AT 1; THACO 12; D 1-6•8/1-4•8/1-4•8; MR 80%). This cat is living the last of its nine lives. If it is killed, it will not be reborn.

Level Five

The door star colors are: northwest — black, northeast — brown, southeast — green, southwest — red. The party needs a brown gem, which can be obtained behind door 2; the light beam will turn brown.

Room 2: The room is 40' square and 20' high. The floor and ceiling have disc-shaped curves, 30' in diameter. The floor is curved upwards; the ceiling is curved downwards. The room holds two brown tiger-eye gems. One gem floats in mid-air six inches above the center of the curved floor; the other floats six inches below the center of the curved ceiling.

The two "gems" are actually reflections caused by the two large parabolic mirrors in the ceiling, as well as a small parabolic mirror set into the floor. The real gem is magically suspended in mid-air between the two ceiling mirrors. The reflections are unsolid; objects will pass through them. The mirrors are unbreakable.

If a character tries to grasp the reflection above the floor, he will be able to see the curved mirror in the floor. If that character then looks straight up, he will see a small hole in the ceiling, through which the real gem can be seen. A character must stand directly beneath the hole in the ceiling to see the real gem; from all other angles only the upper reflection can be seen.

If a character gets to the ceiling and reaches through the hole, the gem can easily be taken out.

Level Six

The door stars are: northwest — brown, northeast — green, southeast — purple, southwest — yellow. The green gem the party needs is behind door 2; the light beam will turn green.

Room 2: The party is greeted by a forest setting. After they have gone a short distance, they find a glum-looking leprechaun sitting on a mossy boulder. If questioned about his sadness, he says that the king of the leprechauns is ill and needs a **Potion of Healing.** He will tell the party of a fine emerald they may have in exchange for the potion. If the party doesn't have a potion (or pretends not to), the leprechaun will help them anyway.

The leprechaun will lead the party on a short walk through the woods, where they find a strange box, 30' square and 10' high. The bottom, top, and two sides are of solid, impenetrable metal. The other two faces are red and violet and are directly opposite each other. The Leprechaun will say the potion lies within "Ishcabebble's Rainbow."

These are **Prismatic Bands** within a metal enclosure. There are seven bands of color within the box. Each band is approximately four feet thick and functions as in the **Prismatic Sphere** spell.
* Any character diminutized will be 6 real inches tall and all attacks (melee or magical) will be one-sixth as powerful. This effect will end when the party reaches Level Eight, and affected characters will return to their previous size and abilities.

** Including the **Continual Light** gem carried by Jenelle.

Prismatic Barrier Effects

Color	Negated by	Effect (if not negated)
red	**Cone of Cold**	10 points of damage
orange	**Gust of Wind**	20 points of damage
yellow	**Disintegrate**	40 points of damage
green	**Passwall**	Death
blue	**Magic Missile**	Petrification
indigo	**Continual Light**	Insanity
violet	**Dispel Magic**	Diminutized

The appropriate saving throws apply to the effects of the green, blue, indigo, and violet bands. For additional information, see the description of the **Prismatic Sphere** spell.

None of the walls can be pierced by weapons, etc., except the green, and no wall can be seen until the one before it is stepped through or negated. Once the emerald is removed from the green wall, all walls not negated will vanish.

The emerald sits atop a pedestal in the center of the green wall. Note that only three walls need to be brought down to reach the green, and that a spear with a helmet attached or some other reasonable contrivance can be used to knock the gem from the pedestal and drag it out of the green wall.

Level Seven

The door stars are northwest — black, northeast — green, southeast — red, and southwest — yellow. The beam remains green. A yellow gem (behind door 4) is required from this level to ascend to Level Eight and the beam will turn yellow.

Room 4: The room is 30' in diameter and filled with murky water two feet deep. The characters stand on a 10' x 10' ledge. In the center of the pool stands a flesh golem (AC 9; MV 9"; HD 9; hp 40; #AT 2; THACO 12; D 2d8/2d8; SD +1 or better weapons to hit, electrical attacks restore hit points) with a topaz in his navel. In the water are 25 electric eels (AC 9; MV 12"; HD 2; hp 8 each; #AT 1; THACO 16; D 1-3; SA electric jolt; SD immune to electrical attacks). Five will discharge every other melee round, healing the golem of five points of damage and doing 20 points of damage to anyone standing in the pool, which must be done to melee the golem. The water is very murky, so the eels cannot be seen.

Level Eight

The yellow beam of light does not extend above the floor on this level, the floating stone ring is absent, and the ceiling has no openings. The area is the same size as previous floors of the tower, with smooth stone surfaces throughout. To the east and west are ornate wooden doors, deeply carved with flowing geometric designs of exquisite beauty.

Room 1: Ishcabeble's Bedroom

The floor is highly polished and silvery in color. Directly in front of the door lies a multi-colored carpet of wondrous weave. In the center of the floor sits a wheel-shaped fixture, five feet in diameter with eight lamps equally spaced about its rim.

To the left on the ceiling 20' above is a combination lamp/table sitting next to an overstuffed chair. The left wall to the corner is covered by three cabinets; from their carved tops it is apparent that they are upside down. On the ceiling, butted against the far wall is a large, four-poster bed, again upside down. The headboard is a bookcase, filled with bound volumes. Flanking the head of the bed are two nightstands, each with a lamp. These, too, are upside down.

The right wall at the ceiling is lined with inverted cabinets, the center one having transparent glass doors.

The furniture on the ceiling is not bolted to it; rather, a finial on one of the bedposts is a reverse gravity device with a 12' vertical range. Thus the carpet and lamp wheel on the floor, as well as anyone less than eight feet tall, are unaffected. Anyone jumping or climbing so that any part of his body enters the area of affect of the finial will fall to the ceiling for 1-6 points of damage. The best way down is to climb one of the cabinets. Once the player's feet pass the 12' mark, he will fall to the floor, though without damage.

There are no magical items in this room except the finial, which cannot be removed. The cabinets on south wall contain ordinary clothing (robes, cloaks, tunics, undergarments, etc.), while those on the north wall hold various mundane weapons (daggers and quarter staves). The glass-doored cabinet houses Ishcabeble's handsome collection of cameos and bottles of rare spirits. Some of the brandies are 600 years old. These may be drunk without ill effects, and the imbiber should be told that the beverage far surpasses any he or she has previously had in regards to smoothness and palatability. The overall impression the players should receive is that Ishcabeble was affluent and most appreciative of fine works of art.

The only other feature of note is the bookcase/headboard of the bed. The volumes comprise a complete collection of joke books, as well as tome after tome of puns, riddles, practical jokes and limericks.

Room 2: Ishcabeble's Study

This room has the appearance of a well-appointed parlor. Stone walls have been covered with elegant wood paneling, and the floor carpeted wall-to-wall with a thick, spongy sky blue carpet. Lighting is provided by six opaque white panels in the ceiling eight feet above. Many paintings hang on the walls, all of good quality and depicting a diverse selection of themes. Immediately to the left is an L-shaped bar, and to the right is an open book and quill pen supported by a lectern. Near this lectern, jutting from the right wall, is a large fireplace.

Offset back from the center of the room is an arrangement of comfortable upholstered furniture set in a C-shaped pattern. In the center of the "C" is a tray, holding a samovar, a glass bottle and six cups, on a low wooden table. A collection of twelve, life-sized statues occupy the far right corner.

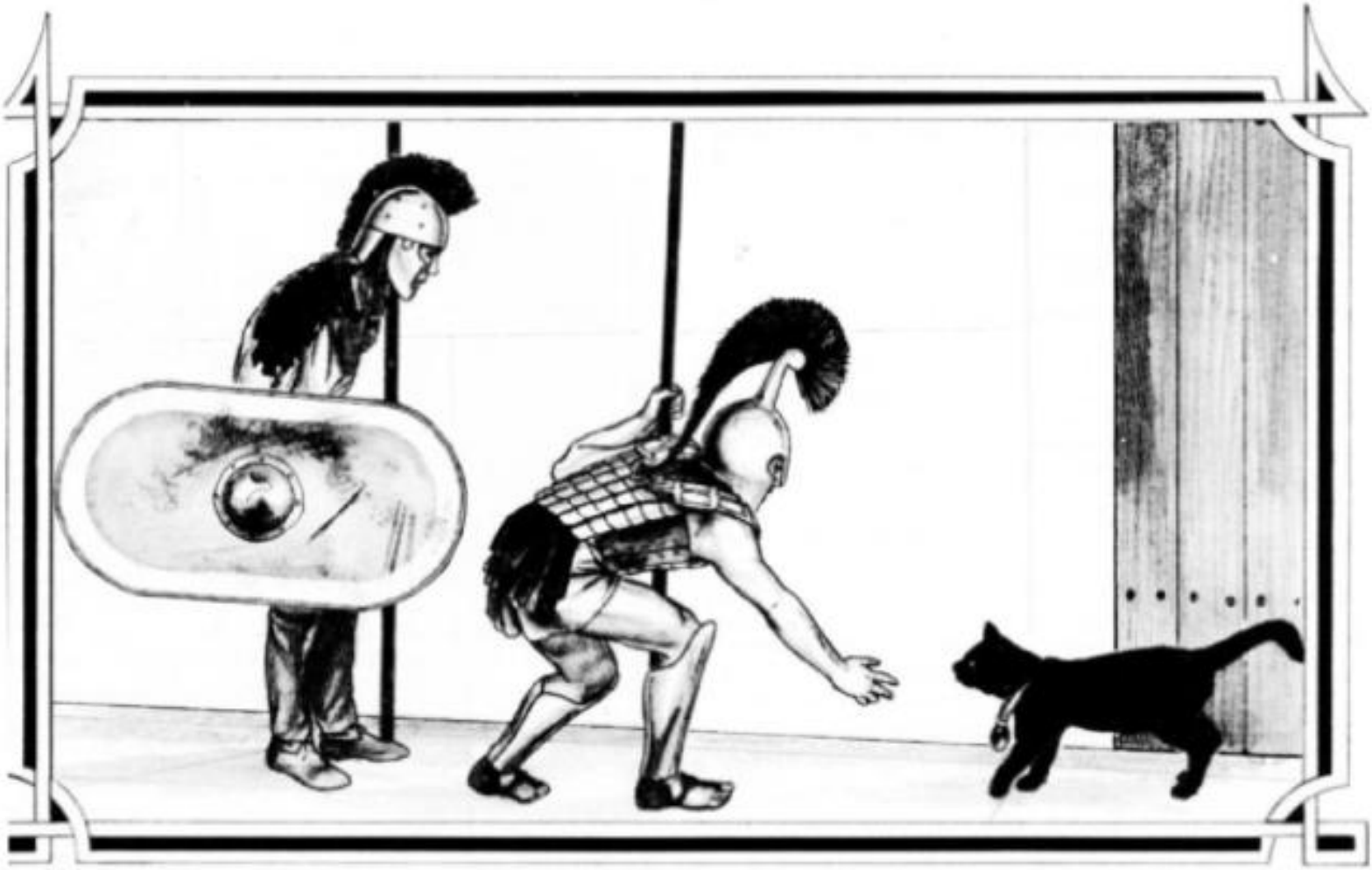
The book on the lectern is a magical item. If any of the players talk, the quill will record the conversation automatically. A special command word is required for anyone to leaf back through the book to read previous entries.

The furniture and table are of the ordinary sort, though Ishcabeble, as a practical joke, placed whoopee cushions under several of the cushions; allow a 50% chance for anyone sitting on the sofas to hit a whoopee cushion. The tray and the items on it are unmovable, though if anyone says "Care for some coffee?" or words to that effect, the samovar and bottle, which contains fine whiskey, will Levitate and mix piping hot Irish coffee into the cups until all are filled or told to stop. The magic and coffee are harmless.

The bar is well stocked with quality spirits, though not as good as Ishcabeble's private stock in his bedroom. No ill effects will be experienced if any are drunk in moderation. In a cabinet behind the bar are five metal containers with close fitting metal lids that contain springy snakes; no damage if any are opened. They are here simply because Ishcabeble was a practical joker. On a shelf in the cabinet are four dribble glasses.

The statuary is unbelievably life-like, carved with such skill that it is easily imagined they could talk and move at any moment. Six represent musicians and hold the following instruments, all sculpted in fine detail: lute, harp, flute, rebec, drum and tambourine. The remaining six appear to be dancers, three male and three female. Upon command (any phrase requesting music will do) the musicians will play and the dancers dance with style and grace. If desired, the animated statues will dance with a player character. Any type of music (suitable to the milieu) will be played upon request. The players will suffer no ill effects from the music or the dancing.

The fireplace is loaded with fresh wood and will burn on command. It cleans itself of ashes and produces more fuel as required.



Read the following when any character moves to the east end of the bar or the north side of the sofas.

> On the floor in the left corner is a four-foot-diameter six-pointed star, of the same design as the huge one on the ground floor of the tower. At each point is a small indentation.

The indentations are the same size and carving as those in the floating stone rings in the center of the tower. The characters should have the six magical gems they recovered in getting to the top. Placing these in the holes activates a teleporter to Ishcabeble's laboratory.

When the first gem is placed the pattern lights; the teleporter is fully activated when all gems are in place. Once activated, one person at a time may teleport. All party members may go, if desired. The final order of the stones is crucial, and must be red, brown, green, purple, black and yellow. The order may start at any point or with any gem, but if the exact order is not observed, characters using the pattern will be teleported to a sealed room that glows an angry red and contains the next **Extra Encounter**. They will be immediately teleported back to the study at the end of the encounter, the pattern will be unlit, and the gems will be dislodged.

Room 3: Ishcabeble's Laboratory

> Unadorned stone walls enclose the 30' • 50' area. The middle portion of the room is dominated by two eight-foot-square work tables, covered with scraps of parchment, books and scrolls, a 10-foot-diameter fire pit, a barrel, and a lectern similar to that in the parlor. To your left down the east wall are floor-to-ceiling shelves crammed with books, scrolls, and glassware. Another set of shelves, 18' long, is set in the far right corner. Centered on the west wall is a work bench, and in the near right corner is a cot and stool. Near the stool is a pattern like the one in the study.

The two tables hold nothing remarkable, just the clutter of an interrupted experiment. The fire pit shows signs of use, but contains nothing but cold ashes; the barrel contains sand to smother fires.

Searching the shelves: Each turn the party spends searching will yield something, though mostly items of no interest. The books and scrolls on the shelves and tables could be atlases, old correspondence and alchemical formulas. The powders, roots, and liquids could be items like sulfur, salt, arsenate of lead, dried leaves, aromatics, and sundry extracts, elixirs, tinctures and solutions. None are harmful by themselves, but if someone desires to ingest several items, follow the guidelines on potion miscibility to determine the effect.

The Incants will be found on the sixth player/turn the party spends searching the shelves on the south wall. That is, one player searching for six turns, three searching for two turns, or any combination that adds up to six or more. No more than three players can search these shelves at the same time.

The north and east shelves: The books and scrolls on the shelving on the north and east walls are not magical, rather reference materials and old correspondence and notes in utter disorganization. The glassware includes alembics, retorts, beakers, and the glass jars contain various powders, roots and liquids (now dried out).

The workbench: The workbench is a cluttered mess, though three books of puns lie amid the piles of crumpled parchment. The cot and stool are ordinary type; Ishcabeble catnapped when wrestling with a knotty problem. The pattern is a teleporter to the study.

The south shelves: The shelves on the south wall hold what the party is searching for. The star marks the location of eight metal cylinders, each marked in flowing script "Ishcabubble." They are sealed with screw-on lids. Inside each is a parchment, and together the eight sheets comprise the Incants of Ishcabeble. Where else would this punster wizard keep them but "In Cans of Ishcabubble"?

EXTRA ENCOUNTERS

The following encounters are to be used only if the party opens one or more incorrect doors on any level. They are to be taken in order, i.e., the first encounter for the first incorrect choice, the second encounter for the second mistake, and so on. *Each of them is guarding a gem of a color matching that of the colored star on the door that was opened.* The DM must determine the gem according to which door and level is involved.

These gems cannot be used on subsequent levels, even though the color is correct. For example, a yellow gem from Level Two, Four, or Six will not satisfy the requirement for Level Seven; the players must get the magical gem from the flesh golem on Level Seven.

The Encounters

1. One guardian familiar (AC 2; MV 24"; HD 7; hp 40; #AT 3; THACO 13; D 1-6•6/1-4•6/1-4•6; MR 80%) with one extra life, i.e., fights once as a 7 die monster then immediately returns to fight as an 8 die. The gem hangs from around its neck. It looks exactly like a black cat and will not attack unless the party tries for the gem.

2. The room entered is 30' square, all surfaces being of smooth stone. After all have entered, an enormous stone block 20 feet square with the lettering "16 T" on its sides hurtles from the ceiling, striking as many characters as possible (save vs. Spells modified by dexterity, if applicable). The bottom of the block is actually papier-mache, so those hit take but 1-6 points of damage, but now they are caught inside the hollow block. The sides and top are very tough and heavy, making it impossible for those inside to cut their way out or those outside to rescue them.

In the center of the floor is a secret panel over a shallow hole. Once opened, those entrapped will find a gem. Upon lifting the gem from the hole, the inside the block will be teleported back to the central area (same level). Those who weren't trapped may rejoin them by simply walking back through the door.

3. One guardian familiar (AC 3; MV 22"; HD 6; hp 36; #AT 3; THACO 13; D 1-6•5/1-4•5/1-4•5; MR 80%) with two extra lives. The gem hangs from its neck.

4. Four fire drakes (AC 5; MV 6"/18"; HD 4; hp 12, 14, 16, 18; #AT 1; THACO 15; D 2d4; SA breath weapon (x5) for 2d8 each) sit upon the raised edge of a dry stone pool 15' in diameter, in the center of which is the gem.

5. One guardian familiar (AC 4; MV 20"; HD 5; hp 28; #AT 3; THACO 15; D 1-6•4/1-4•4/1-4•4; MR 80%) with three extra lives. The gem hangs from its neck.

6. The party enters a large, well-lit, ice cavern. The air is chill, and there are many huge icicles hanging from the ceiling. The sound of water dripping into many small pools is quite evident. The floor is slippery due to this water dripping onto the ice floor. 60' away a gem can be seen lying in one of the pools.

There are 18 ice piercers on the cavern ceiling, 12 two-die (AC 3; MV 1"; HD 2; hp 9 each; #AT 1; THACO 16; D 2d6) and six three-die (AC 3; MV 1"; HD 3; hp 13 each; #AT 1; THACO 16; D 3d6) above the route that must be taken to get to the gem.

Tournament note: The piercers will attack in waves of 6 (two 3 HD and four 2 HD): halfway to the gem, at the gem, and halfway back, but no more than three to a single character. Running characters must roll lower than their dexterity on 1d20 or slip and become a prone target for the next wave. Each time the ceiling is blasted with lightning or fire, the next wave will be dislodged and miss. Particularly intelligent moves (like using the slippery floor to slide through the danger zone quickly) should give an armor class adjustment.

7. One guardian familiar (AC 5; MV 18"; HD 4; hp 23; #AT 3; THACO 15; D 1-6•3/1-4•3/1-4•3; MR 80%) with four extra lives. The gem hangs from its neck.

8. The area is a 60' square room with a 30' high ceiling. Facing the party is a 10' wide stairway leading up to a portico flanked by four Corinthian columns. All the stonework is of white marble. Seated upon a throne within the portico is a man of noble visage, dressed in a white garment, trimmed with purple, a portion of which is draped over his left arm, leaving the right bare. His head is crowned with a laurel wreath, and his right hand is adorned with a ring set with a large gem.

The man is a green slaad (AC 3; MV 9"; HD 9•3; hp 47; #AT 3; THACO 12; D 2d8/1-6•2/1-6•2; SA **Polymorph Self, Telekinese** (1,250 gp weight), **Cause Fear, Continual Darkness 15' r., ESP, Detect Invisible, Locate Object** and **Produce Flame**; SD +1 or better weapon to hit). It is using its **Polymorph Self** ability to appear as a human or, in this case, a caesar slaad. The slaad will not use its **Delayed Blast Fireball** spell nor **Gate** ability.

9. One guardian familiar (AC 6; MV 16"; HD 3; hp 19; #AT 3; THACO 16; 1-6•2/1-4•2/1-4•2; MR 80%) with five extra lives. The gem hangs around its neck.

10. One ordinary black cat (AC 7; MV 12"; HD ½; hp 2; #AT 2; THACO 20(2); D 1-2/1-2). The gem hangs from its neck.

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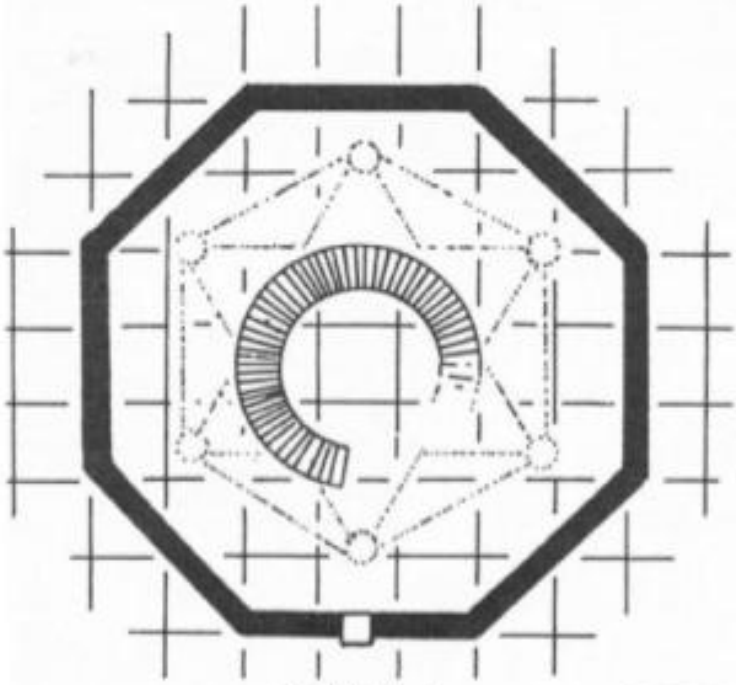
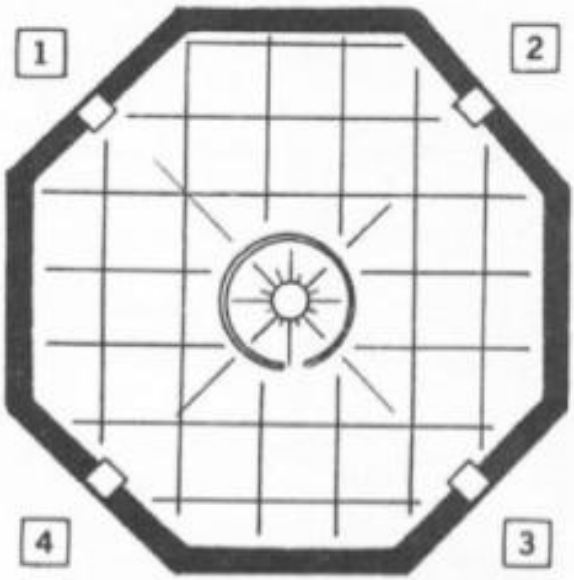
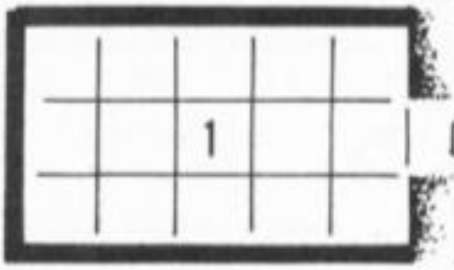
ISHCABEBLE'S TOWER



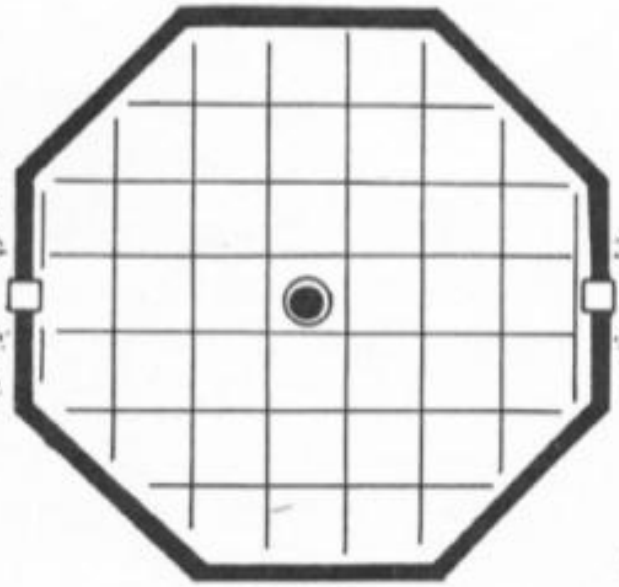
LEVEL 1



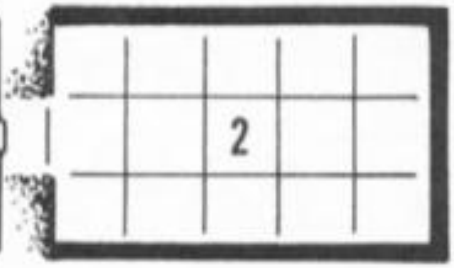
LEVELS 2-7



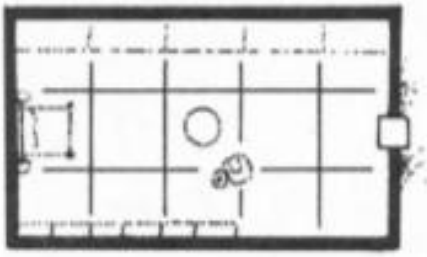
LEVEL 8, ROOM 1

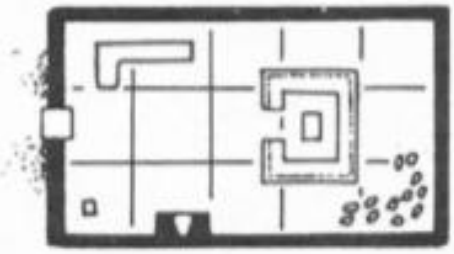


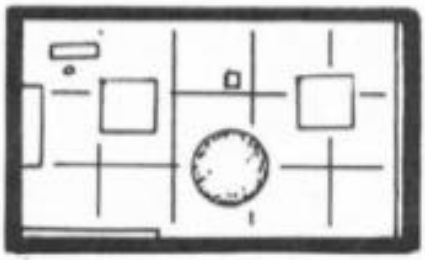
LEVEL 8



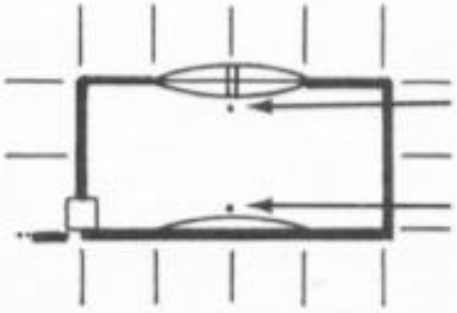
LEVEL 8, ROOM 2







LEVEL 8, ROOM 3



LEVEL 5, ROOM 2

square or segment = 10 feet

THE FIGHTER

by James M. Ward

Everyone has a favorite character class in the role-playing game they play most often. This column exists to give a general idea of what characteristics and/or quirks a superior, balanced character in a particular character class would have. These "archetypical" characters are designed to act as benchmarks for your own characters; they are only subjective guidelines.

However, if all or most of the characters in your campaign are like those presented in this column, perhaps too much is being given away: Beware the curse of Monty Haul.

Fighter Ian McPherson after an encounter with a wyvern. Notice that one of his flour-filled horns has apparently been used.

Persona

Ian is a 36-year-old human fighter. He is generally a stable, sober, well-spoken person. Ian is known for his honesty and bravery. He highly regards magic-users, but his dealings with clerics are shaded by the fact that he is irreverent towards most holy orders, but deeply believes in the druidic ways.

Early on in his life he learned of druidic ways and instantly felt a kinship with their ideas. This has led him to scoff at the teachings of other holy orders. To this day he has always supported the druids in any effort they have asked of him.

He is interested in all forms of weaponry and has a large collection of unusual weapons. He is also interested in legends of war and has gone to great lengths to collect old tombs on the subject.

Ian's one passion besides war and combat is hunting. He has refined it to a high art, having gone so far as to use unconventional weapons to give the animals he hunts a sporting chance. He can often be found hunting birds or larger game with slings or javelins or strange curved throwing sticks.

Ian is usually a calm man, but the subject of goblins or kobolds will drive him into a fury. Too often he has seen the remains of forests dispoiled by these races. He has often gone on hunting expeditions in the nearby hills to track down tribes of the monsters and rid the countryside of them.

When encountering bands of men, Ian loves to challenge one of their number to personal combat. These fights continue until he has disarmed his opponent or knocked him off his horse, whichever comes first. If the defeated warrior is a good sport about the fight he will be invited to Ian's keep (see below) for good food and company. If not he is ordered to leave Ian's lands. (Incidentally, Ian has only been defeated three times since he started this practice. Each time the warrior was invited to Ian's keep and offered a position as teacher so that Ian could improve his skills enough to win a second match.)

Skills

Ian speaks dwarvish, elvish, trollish, and orcish, as well as the common tongue. In the past he has been hired as an expert in the following areas: archer (longbow), habilar (heavy), heavy horseman, Lieu-

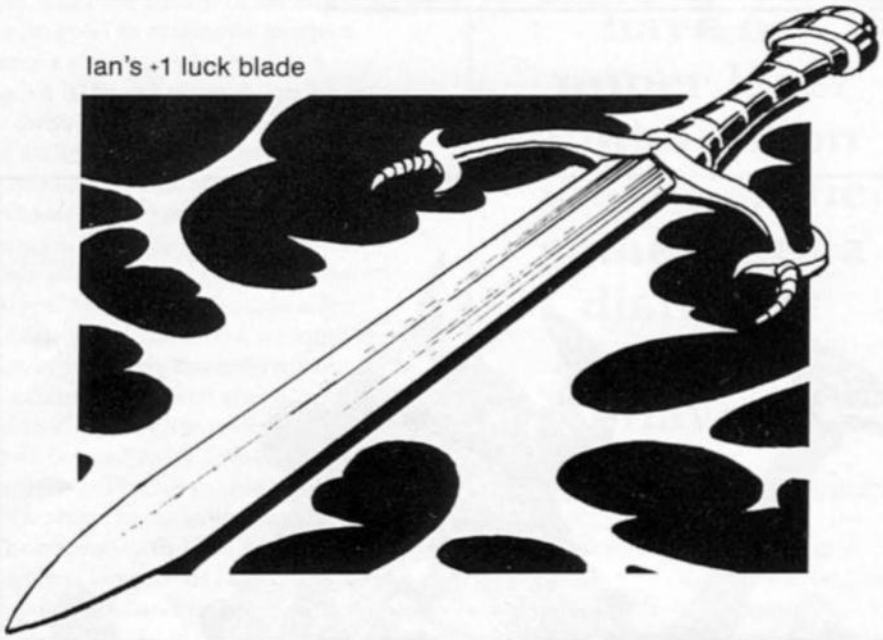
tenant of the Guard, and weapons maker. He is proficient in the following weapons: longbow, throwing dagger, halberd, short sword, two-handed sword, weighted net, ranseur, longsword, throwing disc (as dart), lance (heavy horse).

He maintains a supply of items with *Continual Light* on them. These include a short wooden rod (to be used instead of a torch); a gold coin (easily thrown into a room or traded with savages); two throwing daggers (used against creatures of the night that fear the light); and a large silver cross (to increase its effectiveness against evil). All of these light sources have proven highly useful in his long fighting career.

Ian's most prized weapon is a trained war dog which has been barded to increase its armor class. The beast has been very useful in and out of the dungeon, and as a result, Ian treats it better than he treats himself.

Ian always has 10,000gp worth of small gems hidden on his person. He also has at least ten of each type of coin; he keeps the coppers in a visible belt pouch and the rest hidden away in his armor or equipment.

Ian's +1 luck blade



Equipment

As a rule, archetypes do not drip with magic items, though they do have a few powerful ones. Ian has a magical two-handed sword (normally +1; +4 vs. reptiles). The sword is a neutral good weapon with the ability to detect secret doors and invisible objects. He also owns a short sword (a +1 luck blade with all its wishes used). He keeps this weapon hidden in a sheath in his leg armor. These weapons have served him long and faithfully; they are his only major magic items.

They are not the only useful items he has, however. He has ordinary flour packed in the horns of his helmet; this substance has been used to blind attackers, help locate invisible foes, and make biscuits.

He has razor sharp discs strung in a necklace around his neck; a special pad protects his chest. When thrown these discs only do dart damage but they are also useful for other things: Ian uses them to cut ropes, and has traded them with other warriors who are interested in unusual weapons. He replenishes his own supply at his keep between adventures.

At his belt is a dragonhide sack filled with caltrops. The caltrops are dropped to slow down advancing monsters, chasing riders, or thrown at creatures coming at him from above.

Ian's war dog

Holdings and possessions

Ian owns a small keep with a druid friend. The tower is nestled in a forest many leagues away from the city of Veluna whose lord Ian has sworn the oath of allegiance to. The heads of two green dragons (see below), a cave bear, and a five-headed hydra hang proudly in the main hall of the keep. Ian keeps slightly over 200,000gp in gold coins in his treasury, and a coffer of 90 gems in his chambers worth 900,000gp.

Ian has also earned the respect of fifty warriors who will fight at his command; among these are two lords, three champions, and five heroes.

Ian maintains a herd of heavy war horses on his lands, using them himself for general travel. Knights and warriors also come from all around to buy his trained animals. However, the best of these mounts he keeps for his uses or to present to his lord.

The druid has also trained three hippogriffs as mounts; Ian always rides the largest male when going to war.

Ian allows a small group of wood elves to maintain a shrine deep in his woods. He has never delved into their mysteries but knows he can call on them for magical assistance should the need arise.

Ian's keep has seldom been attacked, and only once has it been in danger of being captured. An evil lord with two green dragons and an army tried to take Ian's keep. For three days Ian and his outnumbered, tired men fought bravely to keep the enemy off the walls. On the fourth day it looked like the end, until treants came from the forest and routed the evil lord's army and saved Ian's hold. From that day onward Ian has paid homage to the treants of the forest, knowing they would help in times of great need.

TWO NEW NPCS

REN DWARFENSON

MODIFIED ARMOR CLASS: *-1*
MOVE: *6″*
HIT POINTS: *49*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *2-8 +5/2-8 +3 (vs. giant class 3-12 +6)*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *+1 to hit on goblins, orcs, and hobgoblins*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *save at 4 levels higher*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *As above*
SIZE: *S (4′)*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
FIGHTER: *8th level*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
S: 17 I: 10 W: 6 D: 17 C: 18 Ch: 11

Ren Dwarfenson is the loyal henchman of the mighty wizard, Lidabmob. The dwarf rose in ability and power while adventuring with this magic-user. Although most dwarves search for ordinary gold and glory, Ren has modified this stereotypic trait somewhat by professing an interest in magical things. His magical items include: *a dwarven throwing hammer, +1 chain mail, +3 shield, Ring of Invisibility, flying carpet,* and many potions.

Ren's greatest passion in life is to fight giants of all types. He personally claims credit for having done away with 5 frost giants, 17 ogres, 9 fire giants, 3 hill giants, and 6 stone giants, and the list grows constantly.

Although Ren has little or no respect for other types of fighters or clerics, he highly regards all magic-users and their powers. As a result, he stays out of their way during combat or while in the towns he frequents on the Wild Coast.

Ren has shaped the largest share of his gold into the form of a lovely dwarven woman. He refuses to talk about this work, but most of the gold he brings home from his adventures goes into additions to this already substantial work. The sculpture is worth over 1,000,000gp.

Ren has also started collecting rare art objects from the numerous treasures he has gained. Although often chided by his comrades on this "undwarvenly" interest, they all respect the value of his collection, which includes sculptures in jade, amber, ivory, and diamond.

Ren has a group of nine dwarven men-at-arms that he takes with him on less dangerous quests. These fighters usually stand guard over Ren's treasures. Each of them has a magic weapon given to them by Ren.

Created by James M. Ward

GUNGIR WOLFBLOOD

ARMOR CLASS: *-1 (2 from behind)*
MOVE: *12″*
HIT POINTS: *83*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *3/2 (2 w/bow)*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type (+3)*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Magic weapons*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Magic devices*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
SIZE: *M (6′3″ tall)*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
FIGHTER: *8th level*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
S: 18(03) (+1,+3) I: 15 W: 11
D: 13 C: 17 CH: 12

Gungir Wolfblood is a half-orc who was raised by a barbaric human tribe in a wilderness land. Having never known orcish society, he has few of the mannerisms that one would expect of him, though he is still a rough and uncivilized character. He speaks the common tongue and his alignment language.

Rejecting the use of heavy armor, Gungir wears only furs and light clothing. A set of *Bracers of AC 2* and a *+3 medium shield* serve him well as protection. A *Ring of Water Breathing* on his left hand allows him to swim without fear of drowning, and he has learned to be proficient at underwater combat using a short sword. A *+3 Scimitar* named Slayer (with no intelligence) and a *+2 throwing axe* round out his major magical devices. His longbow was made to allow his strength bonuses to apply to missile fire.

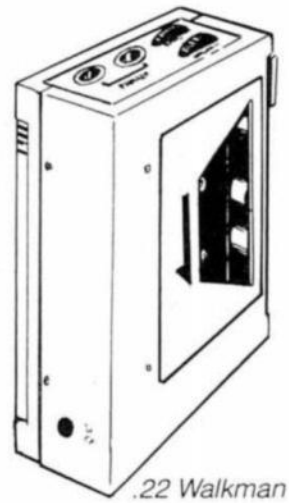
Gungir is well aware that his orcish looks can bring unwelcome attention, so he is careful about his traveling companions. It is difficult to resist his air of command and experience, however, and he knows how to manipulate the attitudes of those around him. He strongly dislikes dwarves and elves, mainly because of their dislike of his appearance; he gets along well with humans, however, and has led several adventuring expeditions.

Gungir is being hunted by agents of several orcish tribes, in retaliation for a raid he once made against a temple of Gruumsh. He feels no particular racial loyalties, and is regarded as a traitor and renegade by orcs in general. He maintains a footloose lifestyle, never settling down for longer than two weeks at most in any one particular place.

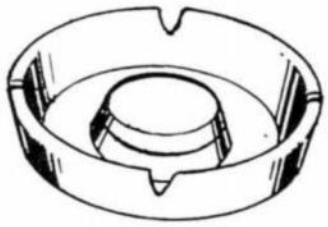
Created by Roger E. Moore

POLYHEDRON™ Newszine wants *your* characters! Send in a couple of your favorite regulation characters in the format used above and we'll try to print them. We're looking for balanced characters with short but complete descriptions (so we can print as many as possible). We can't return them or evaluate all of them, so keep copies. Mail your typed or legibly-written character sketches soon, and maybe you'll see them in the next issue of POLYHEDRON Newszine!

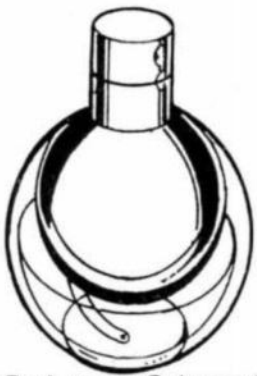
Disguised Weapons



.22 Walkman

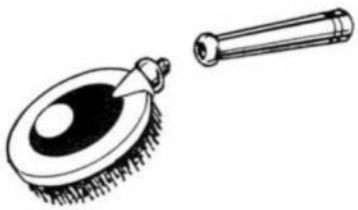


Ashtray Smoke Bomb

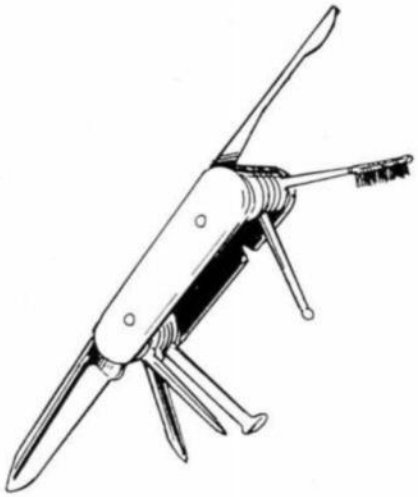


Perfume or Cologne Spray Bottle

9mm Tennis Racquet Submachine gun



Hairbrush Silencer



Switchblade Pipe Tool

by Nicholas Moschovakis

With help from Alex Hartl and Mike Petrusis

The disguised weapons that are described in the TOP SECRET game rulebook are largely conventional (for example, the .22 ballpoint pen), and most are easily recognized by enemy organizations. To remedy this situation, here are several weapons (and accessories) that have been disguised in unconventional ways.

SWITCHBLADE PIPE TOOL

Proto. Time: Five days
Proto. Cost: $350
Mfg. Cost: $85

The switchblade pipe tool appears to be a standard, 4″ long, multi-purpose tool for the convenience of pipe smokers. To use it, the tool must be held normally, with the user's thumb resting along either edge. When the user's thumb is depressed sharply, a catch is released which causes the blade to snap into place. The blade is replaced manually. The pipe tool can be made of any material, and can be used in its normal capacity.

Additional notes: The pipe tool might also contain other devices, such as a trail bug, communicator, miniature bomb, etc., although this would increase its size somewhat. The pipe tool can be especially useful when used in conjunction with a gas pipe (described in POLYHEDRON™ Newszine #9).

.22 WALKMAN

Proto. Time: Three weeks
Proto. Cost: $3000
Mfg. Cost: $1200

The .22 Walkman incorporates a .22 pocket self-load Beretta into the body of a Walkman headphone stereo. The end of the barrel is disguised as one of the two headphone jacks. The safety catch is the "eject" button that opens the cassette compartment; the gun can only fire if the door to the compartment is open. To fire the gun, the Walkman is grasped firmly in one hand and the "play" button is pressed.

Because of its relative awkwardness, the weapon's PWV is 28 and its Weapon Speed is Average. Its Deception rating is 0. In all other respects, it is identical to a Beretta. It is reloaded through the battery compartment.

Unfortunately, the .22 Walkman does not function as a tape player. However, a small radio has been built in, and it is possible to insert a cassette even though it will not play, so an agent wearing the Walkman can appear to be listening to a tape when he is actually listening to the radio. (The headphones are connected to the second headphone jack.) This suggests a second function for the Walkman, as a one-way communicator.

Additional notes: The prototype of the .22 Walkman has one flaw: the safety catch (the "eject" button) will only open the door to the cassette compartment if a cassette is inside. If the agent has overlooked this fact, and has not inserted a cassette, he will not be able to fire the gun until he realizes what is wrong and manually opens the compartment. If this drawback is noticed by an agent and reported to the Special Devices section, then the mass-produced model will have a modified catch that always opens the compartment, whether a tape is inside or note.

9mm TENNIS RACQUET SUBMACHINEGUN

Proto. Time: Two weeks
Proto. Cost: $2000
Mfg. Cost: $1000

The 9mm, nine-shot tennis racquet submachine gun appears to be made of wood, although it is actually steel. The safety catch and trigger are electronic mechanisms located on opposite outside edges of the racquet, disguised as screws attaching small aluminum plates that display the fake manufacturer's name. On the edge with the safety catch, the two screws are colored red and green; pressing the red screw makes it impossible to fire; pressing the green screw unlocks the catch. On the other edge of the racquet, one screw is colored black. Pressing the black screw activates the trigger mechanism, firing the gun. Power for the electronic safety and trigger mechanism is provided by a small battery built into the racquet.

The 9mm tennis racquet is designed for quickly executed assassinations where some accuracy is needed. Its PWV is 75, range modifiers +5/-30/-100/-310, Weapon Speed Below Average, and Deception rating -1. Its nine shots can be fired singly or in four-round bursts. The gun cannot be reloaded.

The racquet can be used to play tennis, but the user will be at a disadvantage because the racquet is heavy and very unwieldy.

Additional notes: There are some slight visible differences between the 9mm tennis racquet and a normal racquet. When an agent is trying to pass his Deception roll for the weapon, his chance is modified by -20% if the inspecting person has Physical Education as a superior Area of Knowledge.

HAIRBRUSH SILENCER

Proto. Time: One week
Proto. Cost: $1200
Mfg. Cost: $245

The hairbrush silencer appears to be a normal hairbrush, 8″-9″ long, with a metal handle. Both ends can be unscrewed in two turns (ten seconds), revealing a functional silencer. Its Deception rating when attached is 0; if attached to a pistol, the pistol's Deception rating will be reduced by -13. The silencer is designed for use with the .22 double-action self-load or the .22 Beretta, and is ineffective with any other type of gun.

Additional notes: Different types of hairbrush silencers can be designed for larger-caliber pistols, but they will be much longer and heavier. Their Deception ratings will be from -2 to -8. Hairbrush silencers that are designed for rifles will have Deception ratings of -8 to -12.

A special version of the hairbrush silencer can be built for use with the .22 Walkman (see above). Prototype time is ten days, prototype cost $1500, and the mass-produced item will cost $300.

PERFUME OR COLOGNE SPRAY BOTTLE

Proto. Time: One week
Proto. Cost: $650
Mfg. Cost: $125

This device looks like a normal spray bottle for perfume or cologne; when employed in the usual manner it functions normally. However, if the spray cap is twisted 180 degrees to the right, the sprayer is connected to a secret compartment in the cap that holds one-half gram of liquid. This liquid can be acid, contact poison, or the like. When the cap is squeezed, the liquid is emitted in a thin stream with a range of one meter and a PWV of 6. The amount of liquid released is determined by how long the user keeps the cap pressed down; one second of pressure will use up the entire half gram.

Treat contact poison as an irritant poison that takes effect in 30 minutes (see page 46 of the TOP SECRET game rulebook for information on poisons). At least one tenth of a gram of contact poison must be administered in order to be effective. A full half-gram of acid will cause 3d10 points of damage; to determine the damage done by smaller amounts, roll 3d10 and divide as appropriate.

ASHTRAY SMOKE BOMB

Proto. Time: One week
Proto. Cost: $850
Mfg. Cost: $275

Although it is not technically a weapon, the ashtray smoke bomb is mentioned here because it can be extremely useful to an assassination or kidnapping. It appears to be a large plastic or ceramic ashtray, 4″-5″ in diameter. Inside the ashtray is a receiver for a radio detonator with a range of .6 miles (one kilometer). When detonated, a hole opens in the side of the ashtray, and a dense smoke is emitted. The smoke will fill an area of 1000 cubic feet per turn (five seconds), expanding until a maximum of 96,000 cubic feet have been filled (this will take eight minutes). Anyone who breathes the smoke takes 1 point of damage every two turns until he gets out of the smoke, and must roll Willpower or less on percentile dice or become panicked. A panicked character must immediately run towards the nearest exit, disregarding personal safety in his frenzied effort to get a breath of fresh air. To determine the duration of the smoke, see the Duration of Gases Table on page 39 of the TOP SECRET® game rulebook.

Anyone who passes by an ashtray smoke bomb without looking carefully will disregard it. Of course, the character may ask others who live or work in the building about the origin of the ashtray. If the ashtray is inspected, it will have normal chances to Con the inspector; its Deception rating is 80 plus a roll of four ten-sided dice. A character who is successfully Conned will forget about the ashtray, reasoning that someone acquired the ashtray and absentmindedly left it where it is.

Additional notes: The primary use of the ashtray smoke bomb is to force targets to leave a building as quickly as possible, and possibly in confusion. It can be placed in the building during a break-in, when the building is empty; then, when the target of the assassination/kidnapping is inside the building, the bomb can be detonated. The ashtray smoke bomb is especially useful because its effects resemble those of a normal fire, and the smoke is not likely to arouse suspicion until after the incident.

The weapons described here are only a small sampling of those that might be used in a campaign. It is easy to put these ideas to different applications; for instance, one might design a switchblade disguised as a credit card calculator, a flashlight pistol, a hairbrush pistol, or an umbrella submachinegun. Remember that if player characters can use disguised weapons, so can enemy agents . . .

RPGA™ Network member Nicholas Moschovakis is a high school student in Santa Monica, California.

Wishes have their limits

by Kim Mohan

Hornrim was a very smart magic-user. There was no disputing that, because you don't get to use 9th-level spells without having a lot upstairs. He was smart enough to know that when he got to the 18th level of experience, he would have a chance of being able to learn how to cast a *Wish* spell. Everything was working out just the way Hornrim wanted it to.

He had been thinking about this day almost since the start of his adventuring career, and now all the preliminaries were over. He had reached 18th level, he had located and learned the *Wish* spell, and he was about to utter what he called "the ultimate Wish." It would be the first *Wish* he had ever used, but he wasn't worried about the consequences — Hornrim was convinced that *his* Wish would unlock all the secrets of the universe for him, bringing him all the knowledge and power he had waited so long to get.

He committed the spell to memory, settled back in his overstuffed wizard's recliner, took a deep breath, and spoke the words he had so carefully chosen:

"I wish to know everything there is to know about the Wish *spell."*

And, just as he had hoped, his *Wish* came true. In less time than it takes to tell it, Hornrim's head was filled with everything there is to know about the *Wish* spell. An instant later, all the facts started crashing into one another inside his cranium. Contradictions bounced off one another, setting in motion a cataclysmic cerebral chain reaction. Two instants later, Hornrim's brain simply gave up. He turned into a gibbering, insane idiot, and when his family found him they cashed in a few magic items and got him a room in the Home for Wizards Who Knew Too Much. He's still there, and you can talk to him if you want, but don't expect him to make any sense.

. . . And that's why this article does *not* include everything there is to know about the *Wish* spell. I don't want to end up like old Hornrim, and I assume you don't either. But we can at least take a look at the AD&D™ rules to see what there is to know about the *Wish* spell. Nobody's gone crazy from simply studying the rules, although I know of a few people who've had some close calls. . . .

Wishes are not all-powerful; after all, *Wish* is "only" a 9th-level spell, and it is only one of a dozen such spells in the *Players Handbook*. Other more powerful forms of magic exist in the AD&D game universe, such as some of the powers of deities, artifacts, and relics. And the AD&D game rule books are replete with specific mentions of things a *Wish* cannot accomplish.

For instance: A *Wish* cannot prevent a character from dying of old age, or enable such a character to be brought back from death, (*DMG*, p. 15).

A *Wish* cannot make it possible to cast the same spell from a scroll more than one, (*DMG*, p. 128).

A *Wish* cannot reduce the time needed to cast an *Enchant an Item* spell, (*Players Handbook*, p. 83).

A *Wish* cannot endow a character with more hit points than the character orginally possessed, (*PH*, p. 34).

. . . And so on. Other examples exist, and we'll get to a few more of them later. These first few examples help us to establish . . .

The First Law of Wishes

A Wish *can do anything not specifically prohibited by the rules, as long as no clear-cut violation of the rules is involved.*

That sounds okay, except we don't know what a "clear-cut violation of the rules" is. Well, that requires some judgment on the part of you, the DM, or you, the player (whichever one you happen to be). You have to be familiar enough with the AD&D rule system to make some justifiable assumptions about the *intent* of the rules — which means, in a nutshell, that you have to respect and enforce game balance to keep the campaign from getting out of control.

For instance, I would rule that a *Wish* cannot remove a class or level restriction for a non-human player character — *not without changing something else at the same time so that no rule violation occurs*. If an 11th-level elven magic-user gets ahold of a *Ring of Three Wishes* and says, "I want to be able to go higher than 11th level," the wish may be granted —

turning the 11th-level elven magic-user into a 1st-level *human* magic-user. Now the character can advance as many levels as he wants to, or is able to, and no rules were broken in the process. If the same character makes the same wish but adds, "and I want to stay an elf," then the DM is perfectly within his rights to rule that the *Wish* simply doesn't, and can't, work — and to punish the player/character for trying to break a rule, he might also decide that the "impossible Wish" put such a strain on the ring that all of its remaining Wishes were dissipated at the same time.

One aspect of what a *Wish* cannot do is distinctive and important enough to be in a class by itself. In fact, we'll steal the words directly from the *DMG* (p. 130) and turn them into . . .

> ***The Second Law of Wishes***
>
> *No* Wish *is able to cancel the decrees of god-like beings, unless it comes from another such creature.*

That says it all — almost. I'd expand and elaborate on that statement just a bit, for clarity's sake. No player character — and no NPC either, for that matter — can use a *Wish* to bring about divine intervention, to get a deity to come when and where it's called, or to get a deity to do anything that deity doesn't want to do, even if no actual "decree" is involved. If a character tries to do such a thing, it will certainly fail, and the possibilities for retribution on the part of the deity/DM are virtually limitless. A deity who got up on the right side of bed might show up, shake a finger at the wisher, and say, "Don't *ever* do that again." One who wasn't so kindly disposed would simply raise his right eyebrow and blast the character into tiny smithereens. Either way, no character is liable to try such a thing twice.

The Second Law also applies, generally and "usually" (as the *DMG* puts it), to artifacts and relics. A *Wish*, or even the action of a deity, cannot counteract the effects of the prime powers of these extraordinary magic items, and a *Wish* is often useless against major powers and effects as well (the DM is obliged to make specific rulings in these cases). Since the relevant text on p. 156 of the *DMG* does not mention minor powers and effects or side effects, we can suppose that a *Wish* is able to undo these aspects of an artifact or relic. You can get rid of acne (Minor Malevolent Effect A) or negate a reduction in charisma (Side Effect B) with a *Wish*, but you can't prevent the "capricious alignment change" caused by Major Malevolent Effect B. As further evidence of the fact that a deity's actions can carry more clout than a character's *Wish*, the *DMG* allows exceptions to the above guidelines in the case of a deity who created the artifact or relic in question, or a deity who is able to fully control the item — and these exceptions can only be granted by decision of the Dungeon Master.

A *Wish* can do anything not specifically prohibited by the rules, as long as no clear-cut violation of the rules is involved.

The First Law and the Second Law cover a lot of ground, and they're also pretty self-evident to anyone who's familiar with the AD&D™ game rules. The Third Law of Wishes, however, makes a stipulation that is drawn from an assumption instead of an outright statement:

> ***The Third Law of Wishes***
>
> *A* Wish *is able to duplicate the effect of any other single spell, whenever the user of the* Wish *specifies this as his intent.*

This is particularly useful for countering the effects of a spell or magic item, in cases where the rules say that only a certain type of magic will work. For instance, the indigo globe of a *Prismatic Sphere* spell is impervious to all magical spells, with the exception of *Continual Light*, which will negate that globe and its effect. If a character is in a life-or-death situation where negation of the indigo globe is crucial, and he doesn't have access to a *Continual Light* spell but happens to be carrying a *Wish*, then the latter spell can be used as the equivalent of *Continual Light*, and the globe can be dissipated.

This may seem like a waste of the *Wish*, and in some cases it might be. But in a life-threatening situation, it may be a character's only option — and it may be a real smart thing to do in a campaign where *Wishes* are relatively plentiful and *Resurrections* are relatively scarce.

Notice that the Third Law says "any other single spell," and also note that it doesn't restrict which type of magic might be involved. Both of these assumptions are sort of shaky, since they're based on an assumption in the first place, but they seem fair and logical. You can't use a *Wish* to take the place of more than one spell, such as in the casting of a *Simulacrum* spell or the creation of a golem — but a magic-user character (for instance) *can* duplicate the effect of a spell that is normally only usable by a member of some other class. In essence, that's what happens when a *Wish*, masquerading as a *Cure Wounds* spell, is used to restore lost hit points to a character or a party. And that's what happens every time a member of a non-spell-casting class uses a *Wish* (from a ring, or through the "courtesy" of a creature like an efreeti).

If a character uses a *Wish* to duplicate another spell, and it's important to know at what level that spell is "cast," use this simple rule of thumb: A spell cast through the use of a *Wish* is treated as though that spell was cast by an 18th-level character, since that is the minimum experience level a magic-user must have to be able to use a *Wish* spell. An exception to this rule is made for druid spells, where an effective level of 14th is assumed, because that's as high as experience levels go in the druid class.

That leads to an interesting distinction: If a *Wish* is used to simulate a spell that's available to more than one class, the wording of the *Wish* must specify which version of the spell is desired. The magic-user version of *Dispel Magic*, for example, would be more powerful than the druid version of the same spell, because of the difference between 18th and 14th level. If, in this case, a player/character wanted to simulate *Dispel Magic* but didn't specify the magic-user or cleric version of the spell, the DM would be within his rights to fulfill the *Wish* by

If an 18th-level magic-user casts a *Wish* spell . . . his effort cannot be undone by someone else wearing a *Ring of Wishes*, even if that someone else is higher than 18th level.

granting the druid version of *Dispel Magic* — and the relative weakness of that form of the spell might cause the *Dispel* to fail when, as a cleric or magic-user spell, it would have succeeded.

When a character simulates another spell by the use of a *Wish*, it isn't possible for that same *Wish* to make the spell special or super-powerful in any way that isn't allowed by the spell description in the *Players Handbook*. For instance, a *Wish* can be used to simulate a *Fireball* — in this case, a *Fireball* that does 18d6 of damage — but the *Wish* does not allow the character to also stipulate that the *Fireball* will do maximum damage (6 points per die). If you want a maximum-damage *Fireball*, you have to make that request with a *Wish* that's phrased before the *Fireball* is cast.

The Fourth (and final) Law of Wishes is sort of a companion to the Third Law, but a couple of particular differences make it worth listing as a separate law. It goes like this:

The Fourth Law of Wishes

A Wish *can counteract or negate any magic spell, including another* Wish.

If a *Wish* can simulate any other spell, it stands to reason that a *Wish* can "unsimulate" just as well. This isn't too tough to understand or justify, except when another *Wish* is the magic that's being acted upon. Can a *Wish* undo or neutralize a previous *Wish*? Well . . .

Yes, if the second *Wish* comes from a character of equal or higher level than the originator of the first *Wish*, and if both *Wishes* are "pure" magic. For this purpose, we have to draw a distinction between a *Wish* as a cast spell and a *Wish* that comes from the use of a magic item (typically a *Ring of Three Wishes* or a *Ring of Multiple Wishes*). The "pure" *Wish* that comes from the casting of the spell or through the actions of a magically endowed creature has more clout than the "second-hand" *Wish* obtainable through the use of a ring or other item. If an 18th-level magic-user casts a *Wish* spell and succeeds in getting what he asked for, his effort cannot be undone by someone else wearing a *Ring of Wishes*, even if that someone else is higher than 18th level.

Yes, if both *Wishes* are "second-hand" magic (as defined above). A character using a *Wish* from a ring can always neutralize or cancel the effects of another *Wish* also brought forth from a ring or other type of wish-containing item, even if the second wisher is lower in level than the first one.

No, in any case where neither of the "yes" conditions is satisfied. A *Wish* from a ring cannot counteract a "pure" *Wish* (although *two* second-hand *Wishes*, used in succession, might be able to do so). And, like it says in the Second Law above, no *Wish* made by a character of any level can counteract the effects of a *Wish* that came from a "deity level" being, even if that being is not definable as having a particular experience level. (Whatever that level might be, it's certainly higher than any level a player character or NPC could attain.)

For the record, here's a fairly complete list of the limitations that the official AD&D™ game rules place on the *Wish* spell, above and beyond the particular prohibitions given earlier in this article — designed to drive home even harder the point that a *Wish* can't do whatever a wisher wants it to.

* A *Wish* cannot raise a character's ability scores higher than 16, except at the slowed-down rate of 1/10 point per *Wish*, so that it takes 10 *Wishes* to go from 16 to 17, or 17 to 18 — and the beneficiary of all these *Wishes* doesn't get the benefit of the higher ability score until the next whole number is reached; a strength of 16.9 is still treated as a strength of 16 for game purposes. The *Dungeon Masters Guide* is very specific on this point, in an obvious attempt to keep characters (and their players) from abusing the *Wish* in this manner. Unfortunately, we aren't given this kind of specific guidance in lots of other areas — but the *intent* of the rules is still clear.

* A *Wish* cannot restore magical power to items that are drained by a *Rod of Cancellation*.

* It cannot save the life of a character who drowns in a *Bowl of Watery Death*.

* It cannot "bring the character back" after that character draws (and suffers the effects of) the Void card from a *Deck of Many Things*.

* It cannot necessarily (50% chance) restore the gender of a character affected by a *Girdle of Masculinity/Femininity*.

* If calamity befalls the caster of a *Leomund's Secret Chest* spell, it cannot bring back the large chest from the ethereal plane when the miniature chest is lost or destroyed.

* It cannot "break through the cloaking protection" of a *Mind Blank* spell — but "exceedingly powerful deities would be able to penetrate the spell's powers."

* It cannot be used to conduct a "magical search" to reveal the fact that a creature or character is under the effect of an *Imprisonment* spell.

* It cannot bring back a character or creature killed by a ghost, because this is the same as dying of old age; see the text preceding the First Law of Wishes.

For all the difficulties it can and does cause, the magic of a *Wish* is an important and perhaps even a vital part of the AD&D game universe. It gives characters and their players — and yes, even the Dungeon Master — a degree of flexibility and freedom that's essential for that universe to have the open-endedness that a magical world must have. It's often said, in this non-magical real world we live in, that you can accomplish anything you put your mind to. Of course, that's not literally true, just as it's not literally true that a *Wish* can accomplish anything in the AD&D game universe. But what sorry worlds they both would be if we didn't at least have the opportunity to try.

DM TALK

by Carl Smith

Being a Dungeon Master is hard — and all too often, a thankless job, At one time or another, every Dungeon Master reaches a stage where he or she feels that "this is it — I quit!" A good Dungeon Master can save himself if he recognizes several things about role playing:

1. There are different styles, or levels, of role playing.

2. It is important to play the game, and NOT the rules.

3. "Burn-out" can occur if a DM is called upon too often to perform that function.

Styles

From group to group, role-playing styles vary. Ideally, there are as many levels of role-playing as there are players and DMs. In general, we can lump all the styles into one of three rather broad categories of role-playing gamers. Each of these three is a style, or level distinct from the others, but not necessarily better than the other styles.

Level One: At Level One, players familiarize themselves with their characters. Their role playing extends little beyond conforming to the statistics and abilities of the characters they generate. Primarily, the DM needs to remind players of what he thinks the limitations of their characters are.

People attending gaming sessions at this level are mostly interested in social interaction with their friends, and the game provides a friendly medium for this interaction; the game is a social event. Gamers chat with their friends, meet new friends, and kid around in a non-threatening atmosphere. The company of friends is more important than the focus of the game.

Level Two: Level Two is the level where players become more ego-involved with the game and the characters they generate. Lines begin to blur between what the player knows, and what the character he is playing knows. This applies to character abilities, and many gamers want to know, "Why can't my character do this — I can do this." This is sometimes a fine line, and friends who game together may overlook that someone has his character do something the character's abilities say he WOULD NOT do. If the DM is a friend and knows the people well, he sometimes lets the lines between person and created character blur. By itself, this hurts nothing, but it could cause problems down the line in a campaign setting.

Players reach Level Three when they totally assume the supposed characteristics of their generated character for the duration of the evening's play.

At this same time, players are more familiar with the rules than Level One players. At this level, the "rules lawyer" often rears his head. A rules lawyer may logically, in the context of the game, point out some rule or loophole which allows him to perform the action he desires. The danger here is that the DM must be wary, or his carefully designed campaign may get away from him.

Level Three: Players reach Level Three when they totally assume the supposed characteristics of their generated character for the duration of the evening's play. The game then becomes an intellectual challenge to the gamer. At this level, players often comment, "My character couldn't perform that action," and they work within the parameters and confines of the character they generate. The challenge at this stage is not winning or losing, but truly how well you play the game.

Strategies

Recognizing these types of play and reasons for gaming helps the DM decide how he is going to react to the group he plays with. In Level One the DM needs to keep the group focused on the game. He needs to emphasize the "fun" aspects of any situation. The players are there primarily for the social value, and may be giddy or frivolous. Instead of fighting his players, the DM can join in the spirit of things and structure all events of an evening's play along the lines that, "they're here for fun, so we'll have fun."

Beginning with Level Two, the greatest problem a DM faces is the strong attachment some players feel to their characters.

Dungeon Masters sometimes make mistakes. Big deal! If you make an honest error as a DM, you can rectify it if you want — that's one of the Dungeon Master's prerogatives!

At this stage of role playing, many players succumb to the temptation to become "rules lawyers." A rules lawyer usually insists on playing the rules as HE interprets them, and usually only when it is to his benefit to do so. When this occurs, the DM must be fair, impartial even to the rules lawyer, and — above all — firm. In the rules for most RPGs, it is stated that the rules are simply to help the DM make a decision. As such, the rules are only guidelines, and each individual campaign may have different guidelines. The DM needs to have every player understand that the DM — and not the players — is running the game. Usually the best time to bring this up is at the beginning of an evening's gaming when no one is personally involved with a decision at hand. The players can then avoid the feeling that the DM singled them out with a "bad" call. By determining who is the authority figure from the start, future arguments are avoided. This is not to say that the players cannot speak their minds or attempt to sway the DM's decisions, but that once the DM makes a decision, they should abide by it and not gripe all evening because they didn't get their way.

It is necessary to reinforce the idea that the DM is not playing against the players. In a very real sense, he is playing with them, and the DM must be careful about being placed in the position of an adversary. Two attitudes that can help a Dungeon Master are:

1. *"Give 'em the little ones. . . ."*
2. *"The DM is always right — even when he's wrong!"*

The first mental state is necessary because no one in a group has any fun if the DM and players are constantly haggling. Such bickering slows the game down and ruins everyone's evening. If a character has a halfway even chance of performing an action, let the player do it, if it doesn't unbalance the game. As an alternative, hand the player 1d20 and have him roll the ability score you feel is nearest to the character ability which governs the desired action. If the player is successful, let him do what he wants; if the player fails the die roll, then the Dungeon Master has exhibited fairness by letting the player roll the die for the success or failure of the desired action. If the attempt succeeds, show the player you're happy with the outcome.

On occasion any DM will make an unpopular decision — in a case like that, do what you think is fair — and do not get drawn into an argument with the player. If you try to be fair, you can sometimes get away with making the "wrong" decision. After all, what you are doing by being a DM is essentially a public service to your friends so that you can work while they play . . . and you don't have to put up with abuse or constant arguments. If the person arguing with you could really do the job better, he would be running the campaign and you'd be playing. People play in campaigns because they enjoy them — and players will forgive an honest mistake, just as they will know if the DM is trying to prove something. If you're right, stick to your guns. No one wants a wishy-washy DM. If you're wrong, admit it. No one wants a completely unyielding DM, either.

The third level of play is the most rewarding — and the most demanding for the DM. This level requires the DM to be an entire cast of NPCs and to portray them all honestly and with distinct personalities. At this time, the DM begins to play with the players and their characters. He wants them to have fun, and he has fun with them by taking the parts of the various NPCs. DMs who consciously role play their NPCs can (and should) add a tremendous amount of flavor to the game.

Similarly, it can not be emphasized enough that RPG players should play the game, not the rules. All games have rules and these rules should guide the DM in decisions he makes for his campaign. As guides, the rules do not and should not cover every specific action that may be possible in a game; if they did, the DM would not need people to play the game, and the game would play itself.

Consequently, as a DM, you need to understand everything about the world in which your campaign is set. Rules should not be ignored without good reason, but neither should rules which don't fit the world in which your campaign is set be enforced just because they are rules. If a certain rule does not fit within your conception of your campaign's universe, don't use it. Never let nit-picking get in the way of good game play.

Along this line, remember that once you allow players to start spouting rules, then rules become more important than role playing, and the game is doomed. No game needs a player who is trying to impress everyone with how much knowledge he has. Remember, it's easier to find something wrong than to find something right with a decision. DMs sometimes make mistakes. Big deal! If you make an honest error as a DM, you can rectify it if you want — that's one of the Dungeon Master's prerogatives!

One of the most dangerous foes of any campaign is DM burn-out. Sometimes a DM is just tired. Being a Dungeon Master is hard work — and few people tell a DM "thank you." If you're a Dungeon Master, tell yourself that if the players weren't enjoying the way things are going, they wouldn't come to game with you. Sometimes a DM who feels drained needs to take a break — take it! A one or two week rest from your campaign can keep players from being bored, and it keeps the tired Dungeon Master from making a mistake or "rushing" the game. It also gives other players a chance to test their skills as DMs.

Taking a break can also free you to play and let someone else worry about being the authority. You may discover that you can get enough DMs so that you can play in several different campaigns and still run your own only once a month. This variety can add new spice to the games in which you participate as either Dungeon Master or player.

A DM walks a fine line, and probably won't be able to please everyone all of the time. But remember, not everyone can DM and not everyone wants to. When all is said and done, however, people play games because they want to have fun. If a game isn't fun, people will stop coming. If you didn't enjoy being a Dungeon Master, you wouldn't continue to do it . . . would you?

DISPEL CONFUSION

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

Fantasy Adventure Game

DQ: In Module B4, the text says that Zargon is "no god," yet his clerics have spells. Are they (unknowingly) worshipping the creator of Zargon who is an evil god and just looks like him?
DA: You're very observant. Zargon cannot be granting the spells to his clerics. Therefore, there is in fact a greater evil force behind Zargon that is actually granting the spells through him. The evil one need not bear any resemblance to Zargon, although it doubtless has the power to take Zargon's form if that should suit its purposes at some time. Zargon is at best an intermediary. The force behind Zargon is as yet unnamed.

DQ: If a character is wearing a *Ring of Weakness*, what are the effects of a *Potion of Growth, Gauntlets of Ogre Power, Potion of Giant Strength, Girdle of Giant Strength,* sword with extra damage, and other similar items?
DA: The damage bonuses for a magical sword will be in effect as usual. Magical weapon bonuses are part of the weapon and do not depend upon the strength of the wielder. None of the other items work on a character wearing a *Ring of Weakness*. The *Ring* magically holds the character's strength score to 3, and no other strength-adjusting magic items will change that until the *Ring* is removed.

DQ: Are magen (in module X2) affected by a *Charm Person* spell?
DA: No, magen are constructs, which are normally immune to *Charm Person*.

DQ: Does the duration of one turn in a *Magic Missile* spell mean that a magic-user or elf casting it can "save" a missile or two to shoot later during the ten minute period?
DA: Yes. After the spell is cast, the missiles appear as glowing arrows which hover next to the magic-user until shot. They will move with the magic-user until shot or until the spell duration ends. They automatically hit any designated visible target, and if the magic-user is of a sufficiently high level to produce multiple missiles with the spell, they may be shot at different targets.

DQ: What about the "visible" requirement for a *Magic Missile* spell? Could a *Detect Invisible* spell allow the caster to use a *Magic Missile* spell against an invisible target? What about dumping paint over an invisible creature?
DA: Either of these methods will work. A caster with a *Detect Invisible* spell running can use a *Magic Missile* spell against any targets the spell picks up. A *Detect Magic* spell will also work if the target is magically invisible, or if the invisible creature is carrying magic. Mechanical methods of negating invisibility will also enable the use of a *Magic Missile* spell. (Paint might not be immediately available, but flour serves the purpose as well.)

DQ: Is the full crew of a ship assumed already figured into the cargo? (If not, a war galley with full crew may carry less than 20,000 cn instead of 60,000.)
DA: The crew's weight is already figured in. The stated capacity is how much the ship may carry in addition to the crew.

DQ: Are there female dwarves?
DA: Yes. you may play either a male or female of any character class. It is a matter of preference on your part; the sex of the character does not affect its abilities.

DQ: Is a wight affected by *Sleep* spells?
DA: No. Undead monsters (including wights) are not affected by *Sleep* and *Charm* spells.

DQ: What happens after a door held by a *Hold Portal* spell is subsequently opened by some creature or by a *Knock* spell? Will it be held again?
DA: Any creature three or more hit dice greater than the caster of the *Hold Portal* spell may break open a held portal in one round's time, or it may be opened with a *Knock* spell. In either case, the portal will relock if allowed to close within the duration of the spell. (Of course if the door is physically destroyed the spell is useless.)

DQ: Can a creature refuse to respond to a character using a *Helm of Telepathy*, or does the character automatically read the creature's mind accurately?
DA: The *Helm of Telepathy* allows a living creature to "hear" the projected thoughts of the wearer. That is, the wearer of the *Helm* can send thought messages to any desired creature within range, and the messages will be understood regardless of language barriers. The creature receiving the thought messages may respond by thought if desired, but may also refuse to respond.

The wearer of the *Helm* may likewise read the thoughts of any willing creature within range. A creature that is unwilling to have its thoughts read is entitled to a saving throw vs. Spells. If it fails the saving throw, the wearer of the *Helm* can read the creature's thoughts; if it makes the save the wearer of the *Helm of Telepathy* will not be able to read its thoughts.

To make the *Helm* work, the wearer must concentrate on the creature, and may not move or cast spells while sending or receiving thought messages.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

Fantasy Adventure Game

ADQ: Is there a verbal component for clerical turning?
ADA: No. Turning is possible even in a *Silence 15′ radius* spell.

ADQ: How many segments does turning take?
ADA: Zero, but it may lose to initiative. (It does not count as an "action" for the round.)

ADQ: Can good clerics have familiars? If so, what and how?
ADA: Clerics do NOT get familiars, but one may be "loaned" to a cleric for exceptional service. The type of familiar so "loaned" is determined as for magic-users. ("Special" results also apply.)

ADQ: Can a groaning spirit be turned by clerics?
ADA: No. Although it is stated to be a type of undead, it is not subject to clerical

turning.

ADQ: Can neutral clerics turn undead or paladins, and can they control them?

ADA: A lawful neutral cleric affects undead (or paladins) the same as a good cleric does; a chaotic neutral cleric affects them as an evil cleric would. (Note that if a character exhibits a marked tendency toward good or evil, the DM may allow this to overrule the normal result.)

ADQ: Are monks a subclass of clerics? Of thieves? Of both? Of neither?

ADA: The monk is a character class in and of itself, not a subclass.

ADQ: With the dual-classed human option, can a character switch from a class to a subclass (fighter to paladin, for example)?

ADA: No. A character may not switch to a subclass of the original class.

ADQ: If a dual-classed human character who is still operating only in the second class (i.e. not yet able to use the benefits of both classes) is hit by a vampire, from which class are the levels drained? If they are lost from the second class, are hit points lost as well (assuming the character has not yet gained any additional hit points from the second class)?

ADA: The levels come off the second class, since that is the one in which experience is currently being gained. If no new hit points were gained with those levels, none are lost in the level drain.

BOOT HILL®

Wild West Game

BHQ: How could a derringer do as much damage as a repeating rifle?

BHA: As far as game mechanics are concerned, the extent of damage from a gun depends upon the size of the bullet. Although a derringer is a small gun, it can fire ammunition around the same size as that of the average repeating rifle, so the damage ratings are the same. The main difference between the weapons is the range, which is a function of barrel length. (The farther a bullet has to travel before emerging from the barrel, the longer the range it has.)

BHQ: If you draw two guns, there is a penalty of -3 to first shot determination. If you draw an FDR and an SAR, which speed do you use in comparing it to an opponent's speed? Which gun do you take the -3 off?

BHA: You take the -3 off both guns. Under normal circumstances, you compute the first shot determination using the fastest weapon.

BHQ: Under the weapons chart, when it says reload rate, does a reload rate of 3 mean that it takes 3 turns to reload? When reloading, do you just stand out there being shot at while reloading your gun?

BHA: No. The reload rate number tells you how many rounds you can reload per turn. You can replace up to 3 rounds in one turn for a weapon with a reload rate of 3. (Reloading involves taking the spent casings out of the cylinder and putting in fresh cartridges.) While reloading you may walk, kneel, or drop prone, but you cannot run, evade, ride a horse, etc. It is recommended that you find cover while reloading.

BHQ: In the O.K. Corral example, I cannot understand why Morgan Earp has a 92% chance to hit. The way I figure it, the Base Accuracy is 82%, with a +10 modifier for short range and a -10 modifier for hipshooting, giving an overalll 82% chance to hit. Could you please explain how you get 92% Base Accuracy on the first shot?

BHA: 82% is correct. The book is in error. Apparently the hipshooting modifier was added to the example as an afterthought and the totals were never changed to take it into account. The ratings should be 82/72/62 for Morgan's three successive shots.

GAMMA WORLD®

Science Fantasy Game

GWQ: The turbine car is listed on the transport tables in the Revised GAMMA WORLD game but is not detailed in the Transport section in the details of vehicles. What happened?

GWA: The car is detailed in the old set but was missed in the new one. For those of you who do not have a set of the old rules, here's the car:

> **Turbine Car**
>
> These holdovers from the 23rd century were still in limited use. They are all wheeled, and powered by an efficient turbine which burns fossil fuels. A solar cell on the roof powers the lights, radar, and climate control systems.

GWQ: Are the 5 points of damage the portent can absorb cumulative over any melee rounds or is 5 a total from melee round to melee round?

GWA: It's 5 points of damage from each melee round.

GWQ: I have some plant player characters in my campaign from the old GAMMA WORLD game rules. The new rules do not allow for this. Should I make them start over?

GWA: The GAMMA WORLD game is a very open system. Don't take everything from the new version and change what you are used to. Just fill in the gaps with what works best.

GWQ: How do the feathers of the terls warn it of radiation?

GWA: They change color to a deep red. The deeper the red the higher the radiation. These feathers will do this once after being detached from the mutant.

GWQ: My player characters want to use the disposable jet spray drugs as weapons. What should the Weapon Class of that spray be?

GWA: Make it Weapon Class 3 but keep track of things like wind or artificial protections on the body this spray strikes.

GWQ: Is it possible to use the Anti-grav Sled as a vehicle?

GWA: This sled was first designed to lift heavy weights and make them easy to carry. If an intelligent being wants to use it much like a modified skateboard it is perfectly acceptable. Double their normal walking and running rates.

GWQ: I like the GAMMA WORLD game a lot and can forgive some of its more amazing concepts, but how in the world can the poison of a fish change a something to stone?

GWA: Treat the chemical given off by the ert as a catalyst that takes minerals from the air and nearby environment and forces them into the body of the bitten creature. The effect appears to cause the creature to turn to stone. If this isn't believable enough treat the bite as magic and enjoy the effect on your player characters without understanding it.

STAR FRONTIERS™

Science-Fiction Game

SFQ: What is the limit to the number of skills a character can know?

SFA: The only limit to the number of skills a character can acquire is how many the character can "afford." Experience points accumulated during adventures can be spent to gain skills as described on page 11 of the Expanded Game Rulebook. The character may spend any or all of the accumulated points at a time. There is no upper limit.

SFQ: Can Dralasites use two weapons without getting a penalty? On page 4 it says they can, but on pages 6 and 23 it says they can't.